

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

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"Peer into the fog of blurred remembrance and sift fact from fiction, reality from drug hallucination."

THE ALLURE OF PETER DOHERTY, BY PAT GILBERT, BOOKS PAGE 110

MY WINIEHOI
LIVE AT ELASTON

Greater love hath no man

The mellowed firebrand wonders about the workings of love. How this generation's Dylan got saved. By Grayson Haver Currin. Illustration by Borja.

Jack White

★★★★★

Entering Heaven Alive

THIRD MAN RECORDS

JACK WHITE pivoted like a pro when it came to the question of a third marriage. "I'd love to have more kids before I'm instantly a grandpa while they're growing up," he told MOJO in early January after the idea of espartils arose, grinning beneath his sweep of electric blue hair in his gilded Nashville office. "So many things have taken me away from that. It might already be too late." Though he had been the first to mention Olivia Jean Merkel, his longtime girlfriend and collaborator, he took care not to overcommit.

But less than three months later, in April, White took the plunge in Detroit's massive Masonic Temple, not far from his childhood home. After inviting Olivia Jean on-stage to play *The White Stripes'* Hotel Yorba, he proposed. Moments later, they were married in front of the crowd, a sequence so surprising and swift it even caught their officiant, Third Man co-owner Ben Swanik, off guard. Weeks earlier, maybe White hadn't known the answer 11. Given the speed of it all, maybe

Still, it is now difficult to hear *Entering Heaven Alive* — White's second album of 2022, the plainspoken rootsy counterpart to *Fear Of The Dawn*, released the day he exchanged vows — without thinking of a lover sorting out the terms and conditions of the budding romance he wants and even needs to last. These 11 songs

map the mind of someone who has enjoyed success and its finer trappings, from money and power to a little family of his own, but is still searching for more: lasting love, shared happiness, a deeper contentment with life itself. If the delightfully madcap *Fear Of The Dawn* suggested a sonic berserker fighting to be free, *Entering Heaven Alive* is a plea to be bound to someone who mostly wants the same.

White, of course, never fancies this will be easy, given both his troubled past and busy present. During *Love Is Selfish*, he harkens to the inherited wisdom of Billie Jean King on its head, admitting that his love isn't necessarily patient or kind, that it does seek its own advantage. "I've been trying over the years to try and overcome these fears," he sings, voice pitched slightly over an acoustic guitar that wants to frolic but instead sounds forever frustrated. "But nothing I come up with proves I can/And I work real hard to make you understand." Failure isn't just an option, then, it's the expectation.

He gets flirty and lascivious during the ragtime update *Queen Of The Bees*, asking



"Someone who has enjoyed success but is still searching for a deeper contentment with life itself."

to bold hands in public and butter his paramour's literal and metaphorical bread. "Oh lord, let them see," he begs. But self-doubt plagues even this peppy confession, as he worries that he's wasting her time or doomed to repeat past wrongs. Such fears wrap around the warm acoustic strums and ascendant keys of *Please God, Don't Tell Anyone* like barbed wire, spiking the blues-rock shuffle with White's warnings about just how bad he has sometimes been. He's stolen and cheated and sinned in uncountable ways, even though he believes it's mostly been in service of someone else — a crying daughter, a screaming son, a dejected lover. "Have I proven myself to no one?" White wonders, just before his voice begins to break.

There is, of course, more to this burgeoning love than tortured self-flagellation. The dim lick of *All Along The Way* may sound swiped from some dark Delta dungeon, but White actually lifts from Hansel And Gretel and, uh, antiquated Florida agricultural practices to pledge his support and partnership. (Olivia Jean aptly plays bass and guitar here.) Its Wurliizer-led chaser, *Help Me Along*, is a gaitless and winning devotional that smartly acknowledges

there's work to be done, its rush of sweetness aside. "I'll keep nothing else from you," he sings near the start, hinting at a prior fault. These five minutes feel like a march straight out of couple's therapy and to the altar — or, in the case of White and Olivia Jean, onto the stage.

The love story is only one of two primary threads here. This is, after all, perhaps the most mellow and settled LP of White's career, its largely acoustic charm taking it from New Orleans back to Nashville, from occasional jaunts to the Brill Building to frequent back porch jams. Recorded almost entirely at White's home studio, with a small cast of veteran collaborators and pals, these 11 songs are built for theatres, not arenas, a rare retreat given White's public bravado. His guitar heroics, so riveting during *Fear Of The Dawn*, are almost entirely absent here. Aside from the sleek jazz winks and brief hyperic excursion of *I've Got You Surrounded (With My Love)*, a cosmic excursion that suggests Steely Dan taking Tom Waits for a test-drive, White sits back and picks, too contemplative now for paroxysms.

These slow burners seem good for White, who passed 45 around the time he was writing them. "Ask yourself if you are happy and then you cease to be," he sings at the album's start, paraphrasing the autobiography of political philosopher John Stuart Mill. Piano and drums suddenly lash against him, like a stentorian schoolteacher reminding him not to repeat the mistakes of his youth. Shut up, and just be.

White has lived his public life often seeking out some bleeding edge of rock music, sometimes stumbling badly. Even the seemingly primitive blues of *The White Stripes* were an exercise in ecstatic minimalism, in pushing a set of elemental binaries, like red versus white or guitar versus drums, to extremes. *Fear Of The Dawn*, then, showed White still had the itch to see how much he could twist rock's weird branches. But what is more basic and barer than falling in love and trying to figure out how or to fuck it up? That is the language of *Entering Heaven Alive*, or of walking into paradise with your dignity intact before it's already too late.



BACK STORY: AN OUBOUOOS

■ *Entering Heaven Alive* ends just like *Fear Of The Dawn* begins — with *Taking Me Back*, a tune about forgiveness or complete lack thereof and the easiest track for White to finish on both albums. While the fiery first version is all guitar pyrotechnics and raucous rhythms, this one, subtitled *Rebirth*, is a wide-brand shot of the withstanding piano. White hits the interplay of the two interpretations. "The song is the same, but it's just what you're saying," he says. "It's how you're displaying it."





The real deal: Kendrick Lamar, raw and resonant.

The Power Of Now

Long-awaited, introspective epic from 21st century hip-hop's poet laureate. By Stevie Chick.

Kendrick Lamar

★★★★
Mr Morale & The Big Steppers

AFTERMATH/CBS

HALF-A-DECADE on from his last album, Kendrick Lamar offers a simple explanation for his lengthy silence in the first lines of this, his fifth long-player: "I've been going through something." Many things, in fact. Themes surfacing across *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers* include the challenges of monogamy and parenthood, Covid, institutional racism and the weight of black celebrity, and his struggles to heal generational trauma within his family and halt long-established patterns of self-destructive behaviour.

Heavy stuff. But then, Lamar is the first rapper to fantasise a Pulitzer. He doesn't deal in escapist fantasies or lurid entertainment, nor does he have a clothing brand or signature champagne to hawk. "I'm not in the music business/I'm in the human business", he raps on Crown (the album's roll call of guest voices includes Oprah-approved self-help author, Eckhart Tolle). He doesn't preach or lecture; rather, he externalises his thought processes, making listeners feel his conflicts. His confessional rhymes touch upon complex issues with a rare depth; like De La Soul's *Positives* before him, Lamar's not hard – he's complicated.

Emotional, intimate, interior – almost unconfessably so – *Mr. Morale...* shares a myriad

with *4:44*, Jay-Z's remarkable set of zoned-out following his extramarital indiscretions. Here, Lamar's negotiating the distance between his own shortcomings and those of the world, finding truths in contradictions. As he's tackling toxic manhood on Father Time, he's acknowledging his enduring enmity towards Drake and admitting, "I'm not as mature as I think". On *Autistic Diaries*, he chronicles his aunt's gender transition alongside his own journey to acceptance and understanding, and then sends listeners along to confront their own interferences.

Aiming to transcend cycles of damage, Lamar is a self-acknowledged work in progress, and eminently fallible. And *Mr. Morale...* falls prey to the same weaknesses of every double album, overlap, overwhelming and uneven. The bristling jazz, offbeat funk and ambitious detours of *To Pimp A Butterfly* and *Unlabeled* give in favour of low-key, downbeat hip-hop, the music subservient to the text.

But when the album works – which is often – it works magnificently. It peaks on Mother I Sober, built around a mournful piano figure and desolate vocals from Portishead's Beth Gibbons. "I'm sensitive, I feel everything, I feel everybody," Lamar begins, tracing the clothed ripples emanating from historic trauma, the "generational curses". It's powerful, suspended stuff, but as Lamar snaps from his litany of tragedy and commits to breaking the chain of pain, the sense of release and uplift is resonant.

Unkempt and lopsided, *Mr. Morale...* doesn't scream "masterpiece!" Like the inspired, sculpted works that preceded it,

but you sense this is an album Lamar had to make. Raw and resonant, its substance, and solemn reach for transcendence, is commendable.



Jessie Buckley & Bernard Butler

★★★★
For All Our Days That Tear The Heart

DE/CBS/LP

Amazing mind meld between actor and guitar hero.



There is no shortage of drama on this record – an inevitable consequence, maybe, of a creative union between Oscar-nominated actor and stage musical star Jessie Buckley and a musician and producer of Bernard Butler's expressive skills. Buckley's love of Sam Lee's Butler-produced *Old Wow* led her to the former Suede guitarist's door; this expansive album just about contains the flood of songs that followed. The Eagle And The Dove has a fairy tale Song To A Steeply grandiose occasional spills into staginess are tempered by Beautiful Regret's country toughness or the Fleetwood Mac wishfulness of *Heaven's Spoke About The Weather*. The slumping of a flamenco dancer's feet; references to Georgian singing, Gertrude Stein and Vila Seckville-West; Buckley's red-wine and black coffee voice; it's all expertly arranged to maximise the unbridled bawdiness intensely. If you don't quite feel it, it's fine – there's enough passion here for two.

Victoria Segal

James Righton

★★★★
Jim, I'm Still Here

DEWEY/CBS/LP

Former Klaxon adopts "deluded rock star" alter-ego Jim and dives into '80s.



James Righton has been busy in recent years playing with Arctic Monkeys, helping to put together the live band for Abba's *Voyage* show, releasing in 2020 his first solo album, *The Performer*, with its '70s singer-songwriter bent. This follow-up is way more slyly and explores the idiosyncratic productions of Japan and Prince. *Righton Live* streams separately, dealing in spoken word. Righton's online promo activities ("coming direct to you live from my garage") is pretty funny but doesn't bear repeated listens, while the electro Touch falls dangerously close to Peter Dinklage's *I Have The Touch*. Better are *Playing To Win*'s echoes of Ultravox's *Vienna* and Benny Andersson's *Synchrone* breakout on *Empty Rooms*. There's sincerity in Righton's lament for a Covid-killed friend in *A Gay At The Races*, but for the most part the emphasis is firmly on the licks.

Tom Doyle

Katy J Pearson

★★★★

Sound Of The Morning

HEAVENLY/CBS/LP

British singer-songwriter's second LP does the same again, only better.



Katy J Pearson's second album heralds few radical stylistic shifts, but showcases renewed confidence, intention and focus. There's a harder edge to her vocal, too, erstwhile country winsomeness (perpetuated by Stevie Nicks-style grit). Otherwise, *Sound Of The Morning* plays like her 2020 debut ferrier, robbing her folk-rock tenacity with booming guitars and keening synths. Pearson's gift for translating trauma into fine song – the shimmering throb of *Talk Over Town* making something authentic of her disillusionment, *Alligator* expressing her anxiety via the medium of jagged post-punk – is a joy, as is her unflagging DIY ethic. And she has a killer ear for detail, from the George Harrison-esque slide guitar *gliding Game Of Cards*' elegant groove, to a majestic cover of Willow's *Song*, the haunting ballad from *The Wicker Man*, rendered in urgent motorik rhythms, peering mythical horns and her myriad, eye-of-the-storm vocals.

Stevie Chick

Regina Spektor

★★★★
Home, Before And After

WARNER/CBS/LP

Russian-American singer-songwriter's eighth album in two-decade career.



Although Regina Spektor came up alongside The Strokes in the skinty jeans-wearing New York scene of the early '00s, she's now considered established enough to warrant her own sign at the Bronx Walk Off Fame and can fill Carnegie Hall. *Home, Before And After* further pursues the piano and orchestra direction of 2018's *Remember The Life*, while bringing in co-producer John Congleton, who characteristically reinforces the beats. Opening with the street blues narrative of *Becoming All Alone* and the rap vocal *And After* established tempo changes of *Up The Mountain*, the tracks then move further into the domain of musical theatre. There are tap-dancing beats in *SpaceTime Fairytale* and distant *And After* and Hammerstein ambitions to the gratifying quirk *What Might've Been*. But it's when Spektor is less showy and more direct that her songs are most affecting.

Tom Doyle

Damien Jurado

★★★★

Reggae Film Star

MARCOPIA COBOL/UP

Seattleite singer-songwriter delivers affecting, low-key concept album.



Jurado's 18th full-length release is a concept album format, but it's not *Tales From Topographic Oceans*-esque folly. This characteristically downbeat song cycle sings the inner monologues of actors and bit players sipping on a movie set somewhere, their anxieties rising to the surface. Scored by acoustic guitar, restrained chamber orchestra and piano – the vibe suggests Simon & Garfunkel at their most intimate – these enigmatic drama often seem low-stakes: the way Taped in Front Of A Live Studio Audience closes on a repeated refrain of, "Have we decided who's picking up the kids after school?" But Jurado understands such little details can be breaking points, and while *Reggae Film Star* is often droll, Jurado's empathy for his characters – from the enduring recriminations of Cole Lambert to the aching isolation of What Happened To The Class Of '67 – often makes for affecting songwriting.

Steve Chick

the feeling that his journey towards some kind of resolution has been long, but it's far from over.

Mike James



Working Men's Club

★★★★

Fear Fear

MATHEWS COBOL/UP

Distraught to impetuous! Unhappy Valley synth-poppers feel the chill on second album.



Given the bleak resurgence in Cold War tenors, the second album from Tedeschi and quartet Working Men's Club has arrived at a fitting moment. Deeply influenced by the protest-and-survive paranoia of '80s synth-pop, *Fear Fear* might have hatched under pandemic conditions, but the band's newly intensified darkness is cryptic enough to have multiple applications. Frontman Syd Marsley-Sergeant marries his martial electronics with an icy conviction, flashes of occasional light – Kraftwerk, Pulp, Chemical Brothers – at odds with the whirling Beethoven of '99, the breathy Depeche Mode of *Widow or Circumference's* Norman-esque stans. These are songs about alienation, claustrophobia, even their latest moments spliced with warty *Heart Attack*, a track that suggests the possibility of an electrodash revival. As to

best, *Fear Fear* is as compact and astringe as its title, an existential crisis dancing in worn leatherette.

Victoria Segal



Ty Segall

★★★★

Hello, Hi

ORAD CITY COBOL/UP

Chameleonic psych-rock time-traveller goes acoustic again.

Segall's 2010 breakthrough, *Mezz*, suggested an ambition akin to Jack White in its fusion of hooks and noise harking at a Nirvana-style crossover. Ten albums and countless side-projects on, however, it's clear Segall has little interest in bothering the mainstream, preferring life as a cultish time traveller, exploring yesteryear flavours of psychedelia. An about-face from the gnarly rock of his *Freedom Band*, Segall's fourteenth studio album is mostly acoustic, recorded at home alone. Its gauzy visions suggesting some rediscovered private press folk oddity from the '70s, Segall's faultless melodic instincts lent an edge by Bolan-esque waltz, inward-looking lyrics

and, on Saturday Pt 2, wild saxophone duets. Meanwhile, the introspective Over finds Segall crooning, "I want to start over! But who will I be?", the title-track's unexplicated hint of Bolan-rock riffage suggest the invertebrate shape-shifter is ready for his next metamorphosis.

Steve Chick



Tami Neilson

★★★★

Kingmaker

OUTSIDE MUSIC COBOL/UP

Canadian alt-country, soul, and rockabilly queen's incendiary fifth outing.



Tami Neilson has a distinctive approach, blending soul and rockabilly with a lush country heartland. Here, she rips into moshery in all its likable forms, and each number's so honky you wonder how you didn't already know it. Soaked with shivering Fender, the title track blooms into Eric Manicasse orchestral as the tune out to be a king herself. Careless Woman is hugely satisfying – trial drumbeat, punch with the swagger of a Feral Peggy Lee: "A careless woman she play too rough/She laugh too loud/She talk too much, wanna be her when she grow up." Elsewhere, there are storming echoes of Amy Winehouse, Bobbie Gentry, even the kitsch, growly sarcasm of The Cramps. While: Martin's guitar-waltz

Beyond The Stars has the borrowed Neilson talking to her musician dad in *dreams*, Willie Nelson gazing at Neilson Sr; it's intensely touching.

Glyn Brown

Perfume Genius

★★★★

Ugly Season

WADSWORTH BLUP

Soundtrack-to-dance project drifts into abstract pop and further strangeness.



The previous LP by Iowa's Michael Alden Hadras, 2020's *Set My Heart On Fire Immediately*, moved between electronics and baroque arrangements. This is very different, being the soundtrack to his 2019 theatrical production, *The Sun Still Burns Here*, in which he appeared alongside choreographer Kate Walsh. Much of the music is instrumental, and when Hadras's voice does feature, as in both *Here* and *Teeth*, it's mostly in gossamer layers of harmony, while co-producer Blake Mills gives the brass, strings and celesta parts room to breathe and directs the odd, mauling dub of the title track. At its most extreme, the repetitive piano riffs of *Scherzo* come across like an erratic Niels Frahm, and *Heart* beat is five minutes of teeth-grinding industrial noise. Without the accompanying visuals, *Ugly Season* makes most sense when there's a vocal to centre it.

Tom Doyle



Arthur Brown

★★★★

Long Long Road

MAGNETIC EYE COBOL/UP

Vital 180th birthday celebrations from the God of Hellfire.

Even if *Long Long Road* had been rather average, we might still have given Arthur Brown a pat on the back for lifetime achievement. But on the opening *Gas Tanks* he sings with astonishing intensity, battling it out with swelling Hammond organ that recalls Vincent Crane's lines on his 1960 single. *Fire*, Brown plays guitars and piano and the rest is down to multi-instrumentalists flicking *Patience*. On *The Blues And Messing Around*, he evokes Screamin' Jay Hawkins, singing, "She tried to poison me with mushrooms/She wanted to see her power on me". The prevailing mood is darkly psychedelic R&B and soul, with jazz inflections on *Going Down*, on which he unleashes his trademark yell. Once *I Had* *Musons* exemplifies Brown's dissatisfaction with the state of the world and reinforces

Martin Courtney

★★★★

Magic Sign

DOMINO COBOL/UP

Dreamy-headed guitar pop from Real Estate singer.

HAPPILY WALLOWING in nostalgia, Martin Courtney refers in the title of his second solo album to what, as a late teenager, he and his friends would call the "magic" road signs that would guide them home in New Jersey when they were driving around high and purposefully directionless. These hazy, watercolour memories are most evident in breezy strumming opener *Cornucob*, where the singer fails to remember the name of a one-time buddy ("It's on the tip of your tongue"). Like Courtney's solo debut predecessor, 2015's *May Means*, this doesn't deviate wildly from the Real Estate blueprint, featuring pealing Byrds-y guitars, simple analogue synth counter-melodies and his semi-detached, Elthott Smith-like vocals. *Time To Go* off-roads into soul and *Exit Music* is a gentle stomper resounding with positive vibes, and all in all, it's lovely, uplifting stuff.

Tom Doyle

Neilson meanwhile: Martin Courtney brings the positive vibes.



Photo: Justin M. Sizemore



Photo: Justin M. Sizemore



Nina Nastasia transforms horror into beauty.

Taking the reins

Singer-songwriter resurfaces after years lost to trauma and grief. By Victoria Segal.

Nina Nastasia

★★★★★

Riderless Horse

TEMPORARY RESONANCE LTD. ©2016/17

IT'S BEEN 12 years since Nina Nastasia released her last album, *Outlines*, its sleeve featuring a pulp-horror style portrait of the Hollywood-born singer-songwriter. Yet nobody — not even her friends, kept at careful arm's length — recognized the all-too-real everyday darkness running through Nastasia's life. For 25 years, she was locked into a psychologically abusive relationship with her manager and close collaborator Kennan Guldjansson: their tiny Brooklyn apartment increasingly became their world, his

impossible standards for her music left Nastasia feeling as if she was the "weak link" — "if I didn't succeed, I was failing somebody else at the same time." Hoping to extinguish a relationship flashpoint, she made the decision to stop making music.

On January 26, 2020, Nastasia decided she had to leave — as she sings on *Ask Me*, a track from her remarkable seventh LP *Riderless Horse*, "I'll be the one to choose life over illness." The next day, Guldjansson took his own life.

Recorded with Steve Albini (as with all her records since the astonishing folk-gothic of her 2000 debut *Days*), *Riderless Horse* is her reckoning with this traumatic history. With almost documentary clarity, it catches all the shame, despair, and guilt — but also flashes of joy and love, glimpses of hope, and on the sudden revelations of the Will Oldham-like *The Two Of Us*, a final resolve to save herself.

This is *Love* brutally pulls apart the very idea of a love song. Afterwards is a complicated survivor's testimony ending with the defining line, "I am ready to live." Yet there's scarcely a lyric that doesn't demand to be

"I'm still trying to get my head around it..."

Victoria Segal speaks to Nina Nastasia.

Given the circumstances behind the record, did you worry about having to retilt the story over and over?

"I found the mastering of the record and mixing the worst. It was very cathartic and painful writing the songs. I just dumped the songs out, lyrics on paper, then singing it and that's it, so that really was helpful for sure during a difficult time. To record it was a good experience as well but when it came down to having to do the technical parts — trying to figure out the order for the record, writing the lyrics down, sending out the artwork — all of that stuff was kind of awful. Talking about it is odd because I'm still trying to get my head around what happened. How I allowed myself to lose myself."

After 12 years, was there a moment when you knew there would definitely be a record?

"It's been an ongoing epiphany because I almost felt like a shell — I was so isolated, never talked to any of my friends about what was really going on. It's a strange thing to have such close friends and have them confide in you and you end up lying to them or make sure they don't ask how you are, trying to dance around stuff so it's almost distracting from knowing about me. It was an awakening; I didn't have to do that any more. And then I started to share songs with other people in various stages and do collaborations with various people — it became fun. The idea of going on tour was a crazy idea because there was a lot of things like driving a car on tour, playing shows again, all those things I didn't think I was capable of doing, so this whole thing for two years has been realizing I am capable of things, and I am not betraying this other person by doing them on my own. So it felt incredibly empowering but at the same time it was just horribly, horribly sad, and with those epiphanies there was also a lot of guilt. I just felt guilty for realizing that I was capable and being happy about it."

What's next?

"Certainly collaborating. I am super-excited about that because that could never be done. I hope I live another 200 years so I can figure out stuff!"

highlighted. "You set a blaze inside our house/ You burned it down and smoked us out," she sings on the from-the-floor keen of *You Were So Mad*. Nature's fibrile waltz, meanwhile, maps a violent dance of dysfunction: "Sometimes you get ahead of it/And sometimes you're in the thick of all his anger and pain." Even the songs that move more lightly — *Just Stay In Bed*, *Blind As Batsies* (a dampened *White Stripes*' *We're Going To Be Friends*) — are captured by death, a moment of paralysis, bar-hopping happiness slowly curdling into meanness. Just Nastasia's subtly shifting voice (like her words, she never overdoes it) and acoustic guitar, it would be hard to listen to if it wasn't so lovely.

Inevitably, it's difficult to detach this record from the harrowing specificity of its backstory, yet *Riderless Horse* never makes you feel like an intruder. That's testament, after 12 long years, to Nastasia's skills, the undimmed songwriter able to transform all the pain and horror into something islefully beautiful.



UNDERGROUND

BY ANDREW MALE

Cosmic Analog Ensemble

★★★★
Expo Botanica
HISTORICAL DLP

Charif Megarbane's thirty-first album as Cosmic Analog Ensemble. Since 2009,



With a work ethic that makes Prince seem slothful, Lebanese whizkid

Megarbane has released over 100 albums over the past decade on his own label, under all sorts of pseudonyms, playing almost everything himself. Cosmic Analog Ensemble is one of his favorite branding names and, in much the same way as 2013's *Fish Fingers* chronicled a fish's journey from sea to bread-crumbs-coated food, *Expo Botanica* comprises 16 non-instrumental tracks which imitate the life of a plant. He is, of course, responsible for the cover painting, so far, so gloriously banal, but there's a delicious, funk-tinged discipline to the *Fish Fingers* ever-so-slightly, while the delicate Ghms & Watts explores the quieter side of electro and both Venico Des Falts and La Corde Sensible could have made the tin *Homme Et Une Femme* soundtrack. Presumably the follow-up was ready last week.



Pye Corner Audio

★★★★
Let's Emergel
SOME CRITICAL DLP

Subtitled British producer Martin Jenkins channels a new above-ground energy. In the 12 years Martin Jenkins has been recording as singer/audio transcription service Pye Corner Audio, his rich

aesthetic of electronic dissonance has gradually crept overground, most noticeably in films such as Jonathan Glazer's *Under The Skin* and Ben Wheatley's *In The Earth*, unsettling dreamlike worlds of temporal slippage where something otherworldly has infected the banal present. That hallucinatory sound reached a kind of unerring peak with last year's *Entropies* *Routes*, a stern conceptual work about plant communication systems. In bright contrast, this new LP draws on different sources, such as the pulsing E-chord tremolo of Spacemen 2 and, on *Warmth Of The Sun*, the arpeggiated guitars of Manuel Göttsching's *Jah Ra Tempel*. If not quite the Beach Boys euphoria that title suggests, it is at least the sound of an artist surfacing from his dark hypoglycemic world and embracing a new warmth.

Andrew Male

Revelators Sound System

★★★★
Revelators
SOME DLP

Has Golden Messenger's MC Taylor explains his love of psychedelics, jazz.



To help make sense of Covid, North Carolina's North Carolina Revelators MC Taylor — best known for Dylan-esque country rockers with a side order of soulful introspection — started working up this side-project with bassist Cameron Ralston. Its four long, richly-textured instrumental tracks them with existential reverence. Whether it's the looped guitars, ethereal sax and space-edged synths of *Collected Water* or shadowy keys, electric clavinet and Holger Czukay-like bass pulse of *Grinning*, both disintegrate two thirds through, tapping into Taylor's affection for dub of a Lee "Scratch" Perry vintage. Elsewhere, Taylor gets devotional on the psych-tinged *George The Revolver* and tips his hat to an Alex Coltrane on *Bury The Bell*, a slow-burn spiritual exorcism buoyed by wistful strings. Far from mournful, *Revelators* betrays his mys-

tic sensitivities, rivaling the day job for emotional urgency. *Andy Cowton*

The Sadies

★★★★
Colder Streams
VERY ROCK DLP

Toronto band's final album with founding member Dallas Good.



Prior to his sudden death in February due to a heart condition, The Sadies' singer/guitarist Dallas Good had penned a minimalist bio for his band's 11th LP *Colder Streams* is, by far, the best record that has ever been made by anyone. It begins, *Tongue-in-cheek*, of course, but God this LP is good. Falltans drip in arcaid, and produced by Arcade Fire's Richard Reed Parris, its sun-footed '60s psych, garage and country is potently renewed. *Message To Belial* conjuring The Byrds' chattering *The Strangers* Golden Brown, and *You Should Be Worried* a splashy, easy-rolling showcase for Dallas and his brother Travis's exemplory, now more poignant vocal harmonies. With guest Jon Spencer bringing hot fuzz to *No One's Listening* and Cut Lip High And Dry redolent of some lost psychedelic western, the stars align throughout.

James McNair

Spiral Stairs

★★★★
Medley Attack!!
AMAZING GRAZE DLP

Charmingly ragged mid-life indie-rock with a dark heart, from Pavement guitarist.



In which the Berlin-based guitarist-composer strips out the lush electronic accompaniment of previous albums and is left alone in a room with just-in-tuned, microtonal guitar and Auto-Tuned voice, bold but beautiful, as rest somewhere between Loren Coomer's blues guitar miniatures and Dr. Chesney's softly comforting experimentation, this is future-proof guitar soil for dark and peaceful summer nights.

Scott "Spiral Stairs" Kammberg intended his sixth post-Pavement LP as a final farewell, before relocating Down Under and retiring from the music business (joke, we imagine, for the occasional live-instrument tour). But Covid delayed the sessions, meaning Kammberg had to direct his band (including Kelley Stoltz and ho-ape's Randy Randall) from Australia. So it's remarkable that *Medley Attack!!* feels like buddies jamming together in a room, swinging between Stoney chugging (*Wole, Baron Please!*) and Sunnymen-esque introspection (*Time = Cash*). The sudden death of friend and bassist Matt Harris midway through the project casts a heavy shadow, Kammberg namingating upon loss and the fragility of life, especially on his affecting tribute to Harris, *Pressure Drop*. The result is an album of ramshackle midlife rock with dark, resonant depths, and easily Kammberg's finest in years. Here's hoping he reneges on the retirement.

Steve Chirk



The Ephemeron Loop

★★★★
Psychonautic Escapism
HEAVY DRUGS DLP

After age speed-gaze solo debut from Lincoln Glax of Leeds-based "xenofeminist" noise duo, Gutterstars.

Psychonautics have always been about change, from LSD's post-war use in the treatment of mental disorders to its role in the social upheaval of the 1960s and recent resurgence as a tool for neurobiological therapy. For Gutterstars' Lincoln Glax they enabled her gradual transformation from disaffected Welsh teen, raised on the pummeling misanthropy of thrash and rock metal, to *Vymothory Redgripers*, "magical trans woman" creator of this intense, excruciating, multi-layered dream-jazz epic. Yet *Psychonautic Escapism* is not a work of total jubilation. The dark grindcore ghosts of Glax's past self regularly break through the blissful layers of reverberant Slowdive psychedelia. The result is the vulnerable sound of release, where demons are loosed alongside one's never, better self. "a confrontation of opposites" to quote Glax, and a thrilling meeting of dystopia and euphoria.

ALSO RELEASED

Julia Reidy

★★★★
World In World
BLACK TRUFFLE DLP



In which the Berlin-based guitarist-composer strips out the lush electronic accompaniment of previous albums and is left alone in a room with just-in-tuned, microtonal guitar and Auto-Tuned voice, bold but beautiful, as rest somewhere between Loren Coomer's blues guitar miniatures and Dr. Chesney's softly comforting experimentation, this is future-proof guitar soil for dark and peaceful summer nights.

Nils Økland

★★★★
Gledetrådar
HUMID DLP



Originally composed by the Norwegian folk singer/fiddle player for Norway's *Rocka Jazz* festival in 2015, in collaboration with members of his own band and his occasional "power trio" Loren Dames, this is an organic, lyrical demonstration of Økland at his finest; effortlessly moving from reflective, meditative folk pieces to free abstraction and swirling, Necky-style acoustic power-jazz.

Tony Rolando

★★★★
Breakin' Is A Memory
MUSIC DLP



Tony Rolando is the founder of North Carolina melodic synth manufacturers Make Noise and there are points when listening to this, his debut LP, where it feels like he might have created little more than a demonstration album for his products. Yet gradually, subtly, these synth arpeggios and oscillations grow in emotional weight and meaning until you are immersed in its minimalist, nostalgic melancholy.

Diatom Deli

★★★★
Time-Lapse Nature
RYNG RITE DLP



Listening to *Tragic*, diaphanous songs of Tennessee-born Delia Palomares-Sik, an immediate reference point might be Mavis Riperton, but cross-proceed with some self-released ambient US R&B LP of the mid-'70s. Field recordings of rustlings and local parks interlarded with Palomares-Sik's ethereal solo lullabies and melancholy guitar-picking to conjure up lively pastoral days of hope and sadness. *AM*



In full flow: The Sadies, with the late Dallas Good (far right).



Glenn Jones

★★★★

Vade Mecum

NEKILL ROCKY, COGOLAP

Cal De Sae founder and American Primitive guitar acolyte's eighth solo LP.

In *The Time Machine*, George Pal's 1960 film adaptation of the HG Wells' 1895 novella, we see Rod Taylor's Victorian time-traveler journey into our present and future on a machine that is defiantly, resolutely of the past, a valve and steam-powered contraption almost comically incongruous. Listening to this, the eighth solo studio album from Jones, you get a similar feeling, that here is an artist going into the beyond armed only with the most ancient and oldest of acoustic materials, guitar and banjo. Drawing on nearly 70 years of personal history of memory and loss, Jones manages to transform these sad notes of memory into glistening maps for moving forward. There is an optimism and experimentation in Jones's playing that is simultaneously uplifting and beguiling. He has moved the past into the future and you find that you are happy to travel

with him and emerge into a new and better world.
—Andrew Male

Master Musicians Of Jajouka Led By Bachir Attar

★★★★

Dancing Under The Moon

GLITTERBAT, CIVOL

A double dose of healing trance music from the Moroccan shamans.



In an isolated village in the foothills of the Rif mountains, a group of Berber suli musicians have been preserving the folkloric traditions of their Persian and Arcadian forebears for thousands of years. Recorded by Brian Jones in 1968 and harmonized by Onnette Coleman on *Dancing in Your Head*, the *Master Musicians Of Jajouka* are rightly revered for their ecstatic trance music, the double-headed ghaita and an array of hand-drums capable of exciting demons and healing psychic wounds. Recorded in Jajouka in 2019 on full-spectrum audio equipment, *Dancing Under The Moon* presents two hours of surprisingly varied musical wonder, delivered in extended jams that build to startling climaxes. *Dancing in Your Mind* and *Hilja* give the ghaitas free rein; *L'Arba* has duelling oud and violin, and *Khamsa Khamsin* is propelled by a galloping

rhythm that seems to echo through the ages.
—David Katz

Naima Brock

★★★★

Giant Palm

SLIP FROM MEMORIAL OF DOING TODAY, COGOLAP

Ex-Goat Girl's solo debut: a heavenly folk fusion.



Born to a Brazilian father and Greek mother, Brock grew up in São Paulo but has long called London home, where she co-founded Goat Girl before leaving the band in 2019. After that schooling in abrasive indie-gothic country, Brock is coolness and catnip personified, tapping her leadline with strands of Tropicália entwined with European folk; take note, lovers of England's Canterbury scene, particularly Robert Wyatt's glitzy ains and Kevin Ayers's 'wata l'ol'ol'ah' whirry. Producer/arranger Joel Burton steers Brock's battery-rich voice in shifting contours that reach the nuances in her words while leaving acres of space. Woodwind dominions, but there's room for wiry pop synths and harpsichord (*Giant Palm*) and multi-tracked violin (*Toll*). At the end: electric piano on *O Mono*, a cover of Carlos Lyra and Gianfrancesco Guarnieri's 1963 ode to Brazil's favelas, a fusion of sorrow and affection that also defines Brock's exquisite solo debut.
—Martin Aston



Nightlands

★★★★

Moonshine

WESTERN WIND, COGOLAP

The War On Drugs bassist takes another shot at solo project.

Even Justin Vernon might have to crane his neck to see the top of the vocal harmonies Dave Hartsley has so meticulously piled up on the fourth *Nightlands* album. They gather in heaps and drift as Hartsley, the bassist with the War On Drugs, shows he's not afraid of the layered and lush, or to burn up the soft-rock saxophone ambience on his songs. If moments sound like Bon Iver covering Arthur's Theme—a breathtaking mountaintop with wine bar attached—there's also an endearing blend of wonder and anxiety here. Blooming synthia combines with Beverly Glenn-Copeland's New Age synth affirmations on *Greenway and Down Here*, while *No Kiss For The Lonely* keeps an ear on the depressing huzzar realm. *Moonshine* occupies that rich space between hope and melancholic smoothie maybe, but not without its hooks and catches.
—Victoria Segal

ZZ Top

★★★★

RAW

SHELDON BING, CIVOL

Produced by Billy Gibbons "in righteous memory of Dusty Hill."



The new ZZ Top studio album that was reportedly done and dusted (and by the time of the bassist's passing in 2021) has yet to appear, so there's a slight air of holding pattern about *RAW*, a live and audience-less set recorded at venerable honky-tonk joint Gruene Hall while the trio were making 2019 Netflix documentary *The Little Of Best From Texas*. An 11-song mix of milestones (La Grange), early hits (*Tush*) and 80s MTV smashes (*Gimme All Your Lovin'*), it puts ZZ's impeccably tuned engine room under the microscope, their "ant us and the music" gambit paying off. The trio are already back on the road again with their former guitar-tech Duod Francis on bass as per Dusty's wishes, but the honored, half-century synergy evidenced here will be tough to re-entail.
—James McKeel



Gwenno

★★★★★

Tresor

HEAVENLY COGOLAP

Jewel-bright third album from Cornish/Welsh seeler.

WHEN TRANSLATED from Cornish, the opening words of Gwenno Saunders' third album are, "Welcome, sit down/Fancy a cuppa?"—an oddly ordinary opening for such an otherworldly record. Flittering between cold hard modernity and something more primal, *Tresor* follows the Cornish Krautrock of 2018's *Le Kor* with songs exploring different kinds of self-determination. Saunders addresses motherhood, freedom, language and identity in songs that flicker and blotch like frames from a 1940s experimental film. Occult hymn Anima sounds like a Kibbo Kift rave; ominous trance Ardnamus pruds the legacy of a "mother tongue", while NYC/W (it stands for "Wales Is Not For Sale") slips from Cornish into Welsh to demand radical change. It's the garlanded ritual folk of *Kan Me* ("May Song"), however, that underlines this as a record of changing seasons and transitional states. Accept the offer of tea but prepare to lose days in the process.
—Victoria Segal



Gwenno: modern, primal and otherworldly.

Paolo Nutini

★★★★

Last Night In The Bittersweet

ATLANTIC, COGOLAP

Fourth album from under-the-radar star.

Paolo Nutini's rise from the bars of Paisley to the arena circuit happened without him compromising his challenging material which, with its covert hooks, gruff, mumbled vocals and often despairing lyrics, nodded to John Martyn. Mean-while, his unobtrusive, but miffily grumpy presence served only to summon a wider audience. *Quiet* since 2014's soul-inflected *Capricious Love*, he's re-emerged with a significantly broader musical palette and a sound which, on the heroic *Shine A Light*, borders on anthemic. But there's more. *Last Night In The Bittersweet* is *Got You* with the relentless Krautrock of *Heart Filled Up* begins its almost tynnaul fashion and finishes like late-period Julian Cape, while the opening *Aftermath* samples Quentin Tarantino's *True Romance* and, remarkably, owes much to *Throbbing Gristle*. At 70 minutes it's worth wallowing in. He's pushing his own boundaries.
—John Azizwood

Chris Moore/Getty

Show of strength

Two decades of doom and uplift reach a point of assured power on NYC trio's seventh. By Tom Doyle

Interpol

★★★★

The Other Side Of Make-Believe

NATASHA COUSINS

EN ROUTE to becoming an enormous cult band — with the kind of devoted following who treat their songs as soul-mining poetry and ink their skins with their lyrics and artwork — Interpol, to many casual listeners, have seemed to paint in very similar shades of noir-ish rock. Their colours seem to range from dark to even darker, though years of dogged touring, along with the contrasting emotional uplift of their music, has found them occupying a position similar to the oft-missing-in-action Cure.

The last we heard of the New York trio, in 2017, they were celebrating the 15th anniversary of their *Turn On The Bright Lights* debut and following it up, in 2018, with *Mansuet*, an album recorded with Flaming Lips/Mogwai producer Dave Fridmann onto tape, to preserve its rawness and live-played ambience. This successor is different in mood and character: closer and warmer.

With songs written separately (singer Paul Banks being pandemic-grounded in Edinburgh for nine months), their woodlandhaired in a rented house in the



Catskills and recorded in London, it is sonically

shaped by Flood and Alan Moulder, specialists through their work with Nine Inch Nails and Depeche Mode in producing shadowy music with arena-sized dimensions. If the record marks a shift in Interpol's working methods from jamming out ideas together in a rehearsal space, the result is greater attention to detail and a deepening of each of the three's musical characters.

Built around Daniel Kessler's increasingly spidery, web-weaving guitar lines, Sam Fogarino's twisting and turning art-rock beats (with their circular figures and surprising accents) and topped here and there with deceptively simple, repetitive piano lines, the tracks have a hypnotic effect. Banks's vocals, meanwhile, are more intimate than ever, crossing directly into the listener's ears. The early-years influence of Ian Curtis on Banks's singing style has meanwhile given way to something closer to the tortured passion of Ian McCulloch. In places, the band follow

suit — Gran Hotel comes over like a world-weary take on the Bunnymen's *The Cutter*.

Literally, Banks is typically allusive. In the past, he's elliptically detailed his troubles with alcohol and substances, particularly after getting clean in 2006. But still the struggles appear to be never far away. "I need someone to grasp at," he confesses in *Passenger*, "when I fall into a hole with a mountain on my back." Even at his doomiest, however, whether personally or in terms of bleak world-view, there's hope at the heart of these songs. "It's time we made something stable," he urges amid the snaking instrumental parts of *Fables*.

Depending on your perspective, *Interpol* may well remain either strangely sammy or capable of sustaining a powerful mood. Ultimately, though, there's something quietly masterful about *The Other Side Of Make-Believe*. Strong, dignified, scarred but moving forwards, it's the sound of a band charting emotional disturbances, but emerging renewed.

Interpol: a powerful mood.

Mary Gauthier

★★★★

Dark Enough To See The Stars

DAVEY HIGGINS, CBS/SLP

First new album since her 2018 collaboration with military veterans, *Rifles & Rosary Beads*.

Gauthier's eleventh album feels like a follow-up to *Rifles...* (Jan 2014).

Trouble & Love — but with one big difference. *Trouble...* was all about the wreckage of romance. *Dark...* is all about love. The first three tracks here are full-on love songs. In *Full Apart World*, the I-Shell-Be-Released-ish opener, a stranded woman finds love. In the Dylan-esque *Amsterdam* the lovers are together and Gauthier has "everything I ever need", followed by the church-like *I Thank God For You* — "you" being singer-guitarist Jaimee Harris, Gauthier's partner, who adds tender harmonies to Gauthier's rough edges. Of all the personal stories Gauthier has fearlessly told, this kind of sweet contentment might well have been the toughest. Great songs though, slow-folk gospel

beauties, with a subtle hand that includes Peter Case and Ben Glazer. Other highlights: *The Meadow*; *Till I See You Again*; and the dark, moving title track.

Sylvie Simmons



Guided By Voices

★★★★

Tremblers And Goggles By Rank

DAVEY HIGGINS, CBS/SLP

What's he building in there? Indefatigable Ohioans' latest creation.

He who rests rusts, they say. But GBV's current, 14-album-in-five-years mystic is a remarkable V-sign to staid. While Warck's *Coyote* Hiss *Cathedral* housed its hooks in succinct, poppy songs, *Tremblers...* is a much proggy shift at the absurdist coalesce, veteran linchpin Robert

Pollard eveninging time signature changes and collaged, shape-shifting arrangements as he lives and breathes the work, the work, the work. Again, his tightly drilled obsessions build worlds uniquely skewed, hence the Big Stan-gone-awry thrills of *Roosevelt's* *Marching Band*, the delicious stop-start eccentricities of *Cartoon Fiction* (*Bingo* *Lake*), and the pulsing, imagery-rich opener *Lizard On The Red Brick Wall*. "What is the mission statement/Who makes the call?" sings Pollard on the latter. You do wonder what, exactly, fits his pictures and to what end, but quality control remains excellent.

James McNeil



Momma

★★★★

Household Name

LUCKY HUNTER, CBS/SLP

Los Angeles quartet's third album pumps up the grunge-pop nostalgia.

Alongside a revival in '90s fashion, grunge-era alt rock is currently vibrant again, with *The Breeders* and

Pavement the two clearest points of influence. Momma's two single-guitarists Eliba Friedmann and Allegra Weininger initially took cues from the Deal sisters' own scratchy origins. But *Household Name* is their *Cannibal* moment, supercharged pop that also acknowledges *Smashing Pumpkins* and *Veruca Salt*. Momma wear it well, celebrating, not denying, their inspiration. One lyrical thread is the "rise and fall of the rock star", with namechecks for *Smashing Pumpkins'* *Hummer* in *Rockstar* and *Pavement's* *Gold Soundz* in *Speeding 72*. Momma also take note of that era's many casualties as *Not the Stage* puts it, "If I'm famous for the night, I'll be lonely all my life." The title, *Household Name*, is therefore as much a warning as an aspiration.

Marin Aston



Steve Earle & The Dukes

★★★★

Jerry Jeff

NEW WEST, CBS/SLP

Earle follows 2021 tribute to his late son with a tribute to a late friend and mentor.

A good bet that a songwriter as prolific and

masterful as Earle hadn't plermed on two covers albums in a row. But after playing at Dutton Country troubadour Jerry Jeff Walker's memorial last year, he booked a studio and recorded 10 of his songs. Steve and Jerry Jeff go way back. In his teens, Earl went to Nashville to learn at the feet of Walker, Guy Clark and Townes Van Zandt. Having made posthumous tributes to *Townes* and *Guy*, it was Jerry Jeff's turn. Though some of Walker's songs might be lesser known, this could well be the best of the three albums. It just sounds so good. Warm and rural. And Earle's voice has rarely sounded better, from easy-going barroom country opener *Gettin' By*, to simple, beautiful, tear-jerking folk *My Old Man*, and a very fine version of *Mr Bonaparte*, Jerry Jeff's most famous song.

Sylvie Simmons





Pay-back time: Denise Sherwood joins the On-U roster.

Various

★★★★

Pay It All Back Vol. 8

ON-U SOUND (CD/BLP)

The latest installment of fresh odds & sods from On-U Sound.

NOW IN its 42nd year, Adrian Sherwood's left-field label On-U Sound showcases its wares via the long-running *Pay It All Back* sampler series. Volume 8 compiles outstanding tracks from forthcoming LPs, interspersed with alternate mixes and vintage session outtakes. High points include Horace Andy's devotional *Watch Over Them*, a plea to the Almighty to give guidance to the youth; Rita Mariz's *Mert Awazá Sono* (Hear My Voice), delivered in Hindi, from Adrian Sherwood's forthcoming *Dub No Frontiers* project, voiced by female singers from around the world; a percussion-heavy chant called *Asalataa* from African *Charge*; and a brilliant horn-and-melodica groove, titled *Stonebridge Warrior*, from the first *Creation Rebel* release in over 40 years. Mark Stewart, Tackhead, cult dub-country hero Jeb Loy Nichols and Sherwood's daughter Denise all get a look-in, and Lee "Scratch" Perry's playful *Many Names Of God* reminds of his recent passing. *David Katz*

to take the last chance TB he gives", they are heartbreakers. *John Atileswood*

Steve Forbert

★★★★

Moving Through America

JUST ROSE (CD/BLP)

Eleven new songs from veteran roots-rock folkie.



Forbert's last record, *Early Morning Rain* (2020), was all covers—a rarity among the 20-plus albums of originals he's released these past 44 years. Those songs he covered were diverse, and there's diversity in these new originals too. They range from troubadour folk (opener *Buffalo Nickel*, just voice and guitar) to up-tempo blues rock (*Living The Dream*) and one pretty sad folkie (title track). It's too bad (*You Super Freak!*). What they have in common—besides the craftsmanship and that distinctive, fragile but potent voice—is that they're all portraits of regular guys in small towns or on the margins. Did even struggling to keep up, an ex-jarhead just happy to be free—people who were raised on and believed in the whole American Dream even as that mythical America disappeared like an old coin in an album highlight *Falo Alto*, crumbles into the sea. *Syrie Simonsen*

Minute (2:30 to Be Exact), this is Newcomb celebrating the moment and at his best. *July Witkin*

Pink Mountaintops

★★★★
Peacock Pools

ATO (CD/BLP)

First album for eight years from Black Mountain man's wild, weird side-project.

The polymorphous Black Mountain's 10th album finds leader Stephen McBean welcoming aboard *Melvin's* Duke Over and Reid King's Steven McDonald. A raked-out 180 cover of Black Flag's *Wreckous Breakdown* sets the tone for an LP awash with sly references for music nerds (long titles included *Nikki Go Sudden* and *Smellin' Mags*). Occasionally, the jokes are pushed too far (the fabled English accents and campy synth-pop of *Muscles*). Mostly, however, McBean's native gift for riff and songcraft transcends any conceptual anchors. *Slate's* *Curt*, an ill-timed-yet-also of Middle Eastern punk-funk with a chant of "We're though with the cold war/On to the new war", is darkly anthemic, while the somber psychedelia of *You Sell Around* and gnarly breath

of *All This Death is Killing Me* prove McBean's a master of divergent styles. *Steve Chick*

RJ McKendree

★★★★
Wallflower

HAND OF GLORY (CD/BLP/INK)

Will Teynham's imaginary '60s psych-folk LP for Tom Cox's new novel. *Wilder.*



Of the numerous dread phrases in music, the top three would be "imaginary '60s psych-folk LP for Tom Cox's new novel," "lost psych classic" and "rock/nroll novel". So how to respond to news that the full-length fiction debut by revered memoirist Tom Cox centers on a cult Californian musician living out in a West Country village and that Cox's friend, Will "Dimorphodons" Teynham, has recorded an imagined version of McKendree's lost 1968 psych LP? With awe and wonder is how. Cox's novel is an exquisitely detailed, many-voiced tale of people, place and folklore. Teynham's music is its haunted, illusory heart. Referencing the isolated, multi-tracked mysticism of Skip Spence's *Oce*, the soaring West Coast sadness of Dennis Wilson's *Pacific Ocean Blue* and the amorphous acoustic dislocations of Steve R. Smith, Teynham, like Cox, has gone beyond pastiche or replication

to a divine necromancy—a communication with lost voices, rich in wonder, longing and excited psychedelic flight. *Andrew Mole*

Stars

★★★★
From Capetown Hill

LAST GANG (CD/BLP)

Curiously unheralded Canadians strike gold again.



Never having shed a member, Montreal's Stars have been a sweet since 2014, but they've been making idiosyncratic, sweet-sounding yet lone-some album since 2001. Oddly, for all their obvious accessibility they've never been a serious commercial proposition. The piano-dominated *From Capetown Hill* doesn't solve that mystery. Mostly a mulling over and pacing of time, mortality and placing "all our bets on being young forever". It's a re-anchoring of the considered indie electro-pop which makes them so beguiling. On the pop stamper *Profounders*, they echo *The Pleasers*, but, as ever, they're at their best when Amy Millar and Terriquel Campbell trade vocal lines, especially on the breath *Back To The End* ("no song I sing will make us feel less alone") and when they trade verses on *Shiny* (a la Milan stages, *Tray* trying

UB40 Featuring All Campbell & Astro

★★★★
Unprecedented

UMC (CD/BLP)

A moving tribute to a UK reggae hero.

Finished just two weeks before Astro, AKA Terence Wilson, died, this follow-up to 2018's *A Real Labour Of Love* captures him and All Campbell on a top form, plus a return to the roots reggae style that inspired them to form UB40 in the first place. Almost half of the album was recorded during a five-day stay in Jamaica, the pair backed by drummer Sly Dunbar, bassist Curtis Marshall, keyboardist Robbie Lyn and guitarist Malcolm "Bunny" King, resulting in a moment of pop reggae genius when they all come together on East 17's *Stay Another Day*. Other highlights include a stirring *Sufferer*, originally by The Kingstons, and *Cause You In A Line*, the Loutcha Mack's lovers cut here sung by Campbell's daughter Indica. The original compositions, *We'll Never Find Another Love* in particular, are satisfying too. *Los Wilson*



The Brian Jonestown Massacre

★★★★
Fire Doesn't Grow On Trees

AFFORDABLE (CD/BLP)

The first of two BJM albums planned this year.

After a period of writer's block, BJM frontman Anton Newcombe went into his Berlin studio and wrote and recorded 20 songs in 20 days; all live and most in one take. Ten of those comprise this nineteenth LP which Newcombe says is all about "the affirmation (one gets) by just living", and throughout there is a sense of making music for the sheer thrill of it. Whether on *The Real*, with its transcendental squeals of fuzz guitar and distorted keyboard riffing topped off with Newcombe's petulant cry "No one said I would be fair", or ineffable *Mindfuck*, which hurtles along at high velocity, all psychedelic drone, pulse and psychedelic sailing, or the beatific pop noise of *Wast*



Black Midi's (left to right) Gwilym Iwan Jones, Cameron Pitton, and Morgan Simpson perform on stage at the 2022 Grammy Awards.

Dead Good

Multi-perpetrator and best
Danny Eccleston's m

Black Midi

★★★★
Hellfire

ROUGH TRADE / Nonesuch

If *I've R A* had had "Not For Everyone" tattooed across their foreheads—or possibly used as the title for a song-suite with sections in 1/8 time—it would be Black Midi. Many listeners of a certain age will take at least two of their a legged antecedents—Primal Scream and The Cardigans—as signals to run for the hills. Yet the band's audience continues to grow among younger and older aunts, and what's so filthy or abstract or in-your-face about their music and how they present it is worn as a badge of honor in the same way it's worn by Zappa fans. Meanwhile, the peculiar alterna-
tive of the band's lead singer, Gwilym Iwan Jones, appears to inhabit the Instagram videos where he would deadpanly dispense odd business advice, like breaking down beats concerning an enigmatic alter-ego group, the Orange Tree Bower, as a rabbit hole into which you can go as far as you please.

And "plunging" is definitely the correct approach to Black Midi: if you're to gear anything nourishing from them, they don't offer half measures and it seems pointless to pick and choose from what is not so much a repertoire as a tasting menu. Their third album is probably best described as a rock opera. It comes in waves of explosive set-pieces interspersed with zesty riffs, rather than as a series of songs about distinct characters—including Satana, and it has a theme: death war, the end. How far this resonates any of the real threats the world curates at is not exactly hiser serious; we're meant to take aim of it, in fact, is unclear. As Gwilym heatedly speculates, in his ridiculous no-attempt-at-authenticity American accent, in "The Race Is About To Begin," there's "no end to this nothing nonsense non-song."

It would be forbidding if it wasn't so much an BRIT schooler, Black Midi are virtuoso drummer Morgan Simpson mostly as comfortable with a blastbeat as he is with jazz-fusion fat Glanzstoff in '70-'9, Kansas. Washington was definitely taken with him, but their gymnastics come across as joyful, uncautious, not academic, conversation. *Hellfire* begins with its title track—Brecht & Weill, via Tom & Jerry—boasts the showstopping Sugar Cane blues space-rock

with breathless thrusters (and soaring, yes, only in a way), big-band flame-out Bassist Cameron Pitton weighs in with demonic boleros and the unexpectedly tender and beautiful Soul. While a virginal obsession with death, and what may or may not come after, prevails, it's in the spirit of a picaresque. People are ridiculous—songs are brilliant—Gwilym notes at one point—why should their death be any so.

Hellfire is recognizably the sleek, complex work of the group that made *Shogun* (2019) and *Caution* (2021), so why is it more so? It's more addictive? Ultimately, it's a matter of timbre. *Hellfire*, for all its sped-up intensity, is less harsh than previous Black Midi records. The bedlam of its keyboard player Seth Evans and saxophonist Kald (his mouth has added sweetness to the craziness; Marta Sagona's production allows a more spacious canvas where the instruments seem to live more naturally. Previously, exposure to Black Midi required an immediate bedside with a cool blanket pressed to the forehead. But there's something about the shape and dynamic of *Hellfire* that makes you want to play it again, straight away.

Not for everyone: Black Midi probably wouldn't have it any other way. But even sceptics may be about to discover their hell isn't a bad place to be.



Laura Veirs:
forming and
realigning new
boundaries.



Laura Veirs

★★★★★
Found Light

After a long struggle for
Veirs post-divorce
a discapo on twelfth album

WITH 2020's *the Echo*, Laura

Veirs inadvertently charted the integration of her marriage to her producer Tucker Martine's *Found Light*, then, arrives as a statement of craft independence, the indie-punk gallop of Winter Winnows the most decisive one drawn under her past. Yet a songwriter as sensitive as Veirs was never just going to trade in pure defiance: these songs pin down the emotional, phantom pains of separation, the bits of past entangled in the present. The patterning electronics of *the Aetna* deals with memory, regret, and collateral damage. Ring Song's delicate piano filigree is a power-pop blues for the internet age. Naked Hymn and Can't Help But Sing, meanwhile, suggest complex tales of sadness and sex release and "reclamation." It's a beautiful, nuanced record, the sound of new boundaries forming and real growth as she sings on Seattle's Halsey, "I'll give a lot/But not too much away."

—Vivian Sobel



The Burning Hell

★★★★★
Garbage Land

BE GARD: It's LP
is high drama to go from
Canada's death metal
to indie rock

The Burning Hell's base is St. John's, Canada's easternmost city. There, on the island of Newfoundland, it's impossible to be unaware of the Post-Communist shoreline. For The Burning Hell's Mattias Kerr, the torrent of debts came to represent Garbage Land. The album of the same name tells the backstory of what he observed. *Minor Characters* charts the gaslighting of a corkcreeper, a pedal boat and the girls live-bombing the lobby at *The Last Normal Day*, a human presence is oblivious to this inundation partially applying the end. With his regular co-conspirator Amer Sharrar and Jose Nicoll, Kerr's concept LP could be a parade of misery but instead it's funny, sadistic and ironic. Add in a new wayway, loaded with vulnerability, and it's impossible not to be awayed by these scorchingly funny story songs.

—Kieran Tyler

Charles Lloyd

★★★★★
Chape

It is a song about
Katherine Tegen's *The OP*
is a song about
the author's own life
and the music of Morgan

Endlessly on a quest for fresh ways to frame his improvisative jazz gifts, cherished Memphis elder statesman Charles Lloyd captured this two's piece on the first disc, during WITH the delicate acoustics of San Antonio's Coates Chapter 20.8, Billy Steigman's Blood Court and Bowie Diner's *My Aunt* and both. Rapidly re-imagined, Lloyd's fluidly shifting off *Freeze* and Morgan's in line a sport and understated skills Lloyd's dignity and selflessness telling his partner's gentle chordings and shadowy gasp filling take the lead on graceful originals *Sang Noy*, *Judy* and *Dorothy's Studio* never diminishes his own contributions of anything, his searching sense's storytelling solos are sales-made for a set-up that when plays as one, intelligently competing each other's phrases. It gives this series off to an elegant flow.

—Andy Cohen



Stephen Mallinder

★★★★★
Tuck Tick Tick

It's a song about
Mallinder's LP is a solo
album by a
founder

Particularly rendered with his long-time manager for Benji Mallinder's second solo LP is a lengthy career defined by collaboration: first with house, electro and techno while staying true to his industrial heritage. The bass guitar he rediscovers on *Clutter* is a new's rye LP with *Control* is a *ground* no, a one-note riff driving the floppy boys and multi-layered persuasion of *Contact* and bringing new swing funk to *Galaxy*. *Shades of Detroit* where the standard spin spatters and shuffling rhythms of *Stick To The Body* while the downtown circa track dips with deadpan menace. Mallinder's opaque whimsy HB shattering rather than bright colors are a crucial part of the fabric, making a little go a long way on a contagious romp, up there with common cut peak *Calos* circa *The Crack* down and *Micro* Phases.

—Andy Cohen



Chris Bangs & Mick Talbot

★★★★★
Back To Bliss

Small combo Hammond jazz from former Slip & Co. members. Organic. Mick Talbot is best known for co-founding The Style Council with Paul Weller. Chris Bangs is a DJ, producer and percussionist. The pair have previously recorded together in acid jazz outfit Yaka Yaka and Soulstride. JK Bangs actually coined the phrase acid jazz. As Bangs & Talbot, they make Mod jazz for dancers. Some of it is romish take of the retro-instrumental. Talbot wrote on TSC. Goody Goody a gospel piano blues for instance with its brass and handclaps and snatch of West African Man and Pick n' Pick is a Mick solo piece where he goes overboard playing piano, Hammond, Wurlitzer and Rhodes keys. Other tracks, merchandise to Motown — an instrumental take on Marvin Gaye's *How Sweet It Is*, *To Be Loved By You* and the bossy *It's Alright* could be off cuts from a 2-CD vinyl set.

—Lark Walker

Harkin

★★★★★
Honeymoon Suite

It's a song about
Harkin's LP is a
romantic album
by a
founder

Formerly of Leeds indie quartet *Sex Larkin*, Kate Harkin's world expanded as a touring member of Sleater-Kinney, and with Kurt Vile and Courtney Barnett. None of that history, nor her own self-titled debut's fiery guitars, are reflected in *Honeymoon Suite*, her second LP. Recorded in 2020, at home alone with her now-wife she Jing the same workspace. Harkin's adoption of "digital intimacy" is most extreme on *Driving Down A Flight Of Stars*, a minutes of floating ambience that suggests a particularly immersive moment of solitude. Otherwise, the LP delves into gorgeous dream-pop, lockdown's simultaneous anxiety and peace plays like *On Her Again*, or *Maritime*, lighting a *to-be-hug* glow, the joyful *I Gave Me*, *The Streets Of Me*, and *A New Day*. "No beauty without friction," Harkin declares on *Listening Out*. "The musician shivers on."

—Maura Astor

The Chemistry Set

★★★★★
Peek Felt Trip

It's a song about
The Chemistry Set's LP is a
romantic album
by a
founder

The Chemistry Set is a Philly-adjacent rock band named after a 1960s *Felt Trip* by The Beatles. In an album, trying how many different styles can be forged from the psychodisc equation. Sometimes, they play with fusion and fusion, a cover of *Mark 7* by The Beach Boys a Gregorian chant for acidic folk rock. Self-Expression. *Trinity* features 60s mellotron, 80s Mod pop and 80s indie. *Mozzy Blues* cover Legend Of A Mind years before Michael Head and Kallabanga. More singularly, *Lovely Cup Of Tea* resembles Caribby Street music hall; *Said Away* could be New's High Flying Birds. It would be bromy apparatus. If the competing user is strong and their conviction so resulting, with plenty of goosebump moments along the way. All this, and a homage to Fellows East designer Victor Moscoso on the cover.

—Maura Astor

Gilbert O'Sullivan

★★★★

Driven

MA
Musical
6. Great & late flowering

After year
a gift
his recycling wilderness, his
self-titled 2018 album took him
into the UK Top 20 for the first
time since 1976. Boosted by
this, O'Sullivan returns with his
fourth LP confidently repli-

calling the creative achieve-
ments of his predecessor. Pro-
duced by Andy Wright of Lon-
doners RAK Studios, the new
material begins with early-70s
authenticity—love Casualty is
a superb driving blues and the
Beatles-esque title track is a
standout. The slick, sexy Don't
Get Under Each Other's Skin is
exactly the sort of Cale-style
dirty that is meant and drink to
his detractors, or tentatively waltz
his, its chameleon simplicity and
satirical message soon
became another O'Sullivan
gem under. With guests such as
KT Tunstall and Mick Hucknall
dropping through, Drives is
like the best of Gilbert.
O'Sullivan's work well crafted
and authentic.

Dave Evans



Dave Stewart

★★★★

Ebony McQueen

MA
The former Eurythmics' sassy

He's based in the Bahamas
these days, but Dave Stewart
grew up on Weirside in the
50s and '60s, where, as Ebony
McQueen details, he was first
seduced by music. As a Slow



art a way, there are ideas to
spare on this lavishly packed
5-CD box and many of them are
daff, not least Ebony McQueen
being a fictional voodoo blues
queen who visits teenage
Stewart in Sunderland. For
over 26 songs which feature
occasional special guests (old
chum Ringo Starr drums on
the jaunty, harmony-laden
One Morning, Back Key Dan
Auerbach adds guitar to Pro-
ble Change and Things Will
Never Be The Same (W-Hout
You, Helena Christensen took
the cover photo) and a 70-piece
orchestra, Stewart lovingly
embraces a cornucopia of
styles. The Kirkcaldy As You
like it, the jangling gospel
climax of Dream On and the
autobiographical bleakness of
What's The Fucking Point help
make it more than just mass

John Astwood

Tedeschi Trucks Band

★★★★

Am The Moon Crescent

MA
Part one of a film score by
Blues-rocking couple

This is the first
audio instal-
ment of an
ambitious
two-album
series
by blues-rock duo band
ensemble led by wife/singer
Susan Tedeschi and husband
slide guitarist Derek Trucks.
Based on a poem by Nizami
Ganjavi, the Persian poet
whose work also inspired
jazz, the ballad, as it reminds
some of his Derek And The
Dominion song, and Trucks
conjures the late Duane All-
man whose slide playing
added immeasurably to that
music. The murmuring vocal,
moaning horns, twining piano
and gorgeous, ambient atmos-
phere speak to the music's
function as a film score, while
Tedeschi and Gabe Dixon's
swelling edgy a soul-gospel
ballad. The duo's Derek Trucks
weeping wails of whooshes
that wrap the five tunes in a
warm blanket. The 12-minute
ender Pasquaun showcasing
his stinging, dexterous
age leaves to listen to.

Michael Simmons

Nicky Egan

★★★★

This Life

MA
Pennsylvan a born, Berklee
schooler, LA resident
singer's enjoyably heartfelt
transform debut



Co-written and
produced by
Dap-King
and Joe
Crispino and
recorded with
the cream of New York session
players, This Life is a bright
soulful and engaging record
that showcases his varied
skills of multi-instrumentalist
and vocalist Nicky Egan. This
is the Berklee graduate's first
full-length album, following
his soloists in various bands
most recently she was a tour-
ing member of Chicago Blat-
man and Time Vases, and
releasing several digital EPs.
Recorded on 8-track, although
This Life may sometimes lack
mass appeal, there's a
proportion of a hard swing
Fender Rhodes led R&B. It's
more than amply com-
pated by Egan's passion and
especially his voice, a beguiling
mixture of Amy Winehouse
and Elizabeth Fraser. The
opening Changes is funky and
fuzz affected, while Back To
You, has a tangy, dog day
afternoon groove. The closing
ballad, Goodbye, is heartfelt
and sincere an affecting ballad
by his an infant, full of hope for
an empowered future.

Dory Larkin

Tumi Mogorosi

★★★★

Group Theory

MA
Blues-rocking
group's new album

MA
Blues-rocking
group's new album

While the title
of a choir in
a, has a few
predecessors
Max Roach
Blues Herbie
Hancock and
others by his own band
playing his own material, soulful
singer elegant guitarist, Jose
Romero's usually access in
both settings.

Donald Byrd. It scales fresh
emotive heights on this
exploration from Mogorosi
d, immer in Shabana And The
Ancestors. He builds on the
quarters of voices he deployed
on 2014 debut Prayer Eld to
up deep into his country's
conflicted past, carefully
marshalling a choir that sides
and soars around Tumi Phelo
and fellow Ancestors. Although
Mogorosi's recurring horns motif
By turns dramatic, (Wadjet,
poetic (Mwema), rocky (The
Fall) and deep (Thaba Bosiu).
Group Theory peaks on
Siyabonga Mthembu, and Gabe
Mogorosi's contrasting vocal
readings of dyed-in-the-scarf
spiritual Sometimes I Feel Like
A Motherless Child, razzling
Dwight. Tobe's quivering lark
with Cosmic vibrations for
spiritual help.

Andy Cowton



Mississippi MacDonald

★★★★

Do Right, Say Right

MA

Superior soul-boss singing and
singer, hung from an Englishman

A trenchant slow blues, Was Wrong kicks this off in an Albert
King groove to which MacDonald adds returns. Better still is
the next and nearer track. Heard It Twice a blues about the
blues with an ingenious take at its core. What's great about this
record, as saying "blues" three times may have hinted, is how
old-fashionedly/nightclubly/unexpectedly it chose advert
according to point of view. In any case, neither MacDonald's
compositions, which are well-tuned and often amusing,
nor his delivery, whether vocal or on guitar, acknowledge
anything remotely progressive done in the name of the blues
in the last 40 years. (A very good thing, blues-rock fans may
want to past. Anyone else, stay around and enjoy MacDonald
doing it right and saying it right.)

American Blues

★★★★

Jose Ramirez

★★★★

Major League Blues

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Charlie Musselwhite

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Automatic

★★★★
Excess

LA trio's second crack at sleek alt modernism. It's all 4 Rooms Human-esque deconstruction on. On the sparse pop variants, their sparse minimalistic jank synths, throbbing bass, and the raw percussion screams edgy drive. **Three Score: Go-Gos and Tones On Tone AC**



Akusmi

★★★★
Fleeting Future

French multi-instrumentalist Pascal Bizeau meshes Gamelan and going with electronica and jazz on a swirl where hyman-like puns of a soft brush-up against synths and strings. A fiercely focused electro-acoustic masterpiece. **Full of life-affirming zeal. AC**



Mart Avi

★★★★
Blade

For album seven, the Estonian neo-soul enigma opens from the shadows in a film noir of his own making. Lustrate in deep synth dives and off-world vestas galore, then Tides goes systems music. **Focus Cool. And it's cocktail time on his space station. Ace AC**



Bon Voyage Organisation

★★★★
Levi Des Rivaiges
With album five out, the duo's laser The aura, equivalent of Scuteuse song story. **SVO** over her. **Arkiee Duand's Ohru** harnesses a 13-piece Farisian orchestra to enhance a hit. **Strolling...and...and...g...saves** **Topped by a reworking of Lettrian's Karma. AC**

Jasmine Myra

★★★★
Horizons

CONTRABA
From Leeds's busy jazz scene, saxophonist Myra proves herself a superb performer, computer across a set of velvety originals, played with cool intensity, while pairing subtle homages to Kenny Wheeler or Moring'ole and The Promise. **AC**



J-Rocc

★★★★
A Wonderf'ol Letter
While his hymning his home city with rappers, MNO & Key Kool or party-rocking with Egyptian Lovers. **Altoce** an LA DJ feature alongside Madlib and the late J Dilla - veers from deep concentration to flat out ebullience in the flip of a dusty drum sample. **AC**



JTQ

★★★★
Mars in The West Coast
Tasting Late Schifno, Quincy Jones and John Barry as his touchstones, the Hammond man returns to **The Money Snyder** territory and with horn and string sections sculpts a gripping **J' of hard crime jazz, cinematic funk and 70s-styled espionage themes. W**



Penny Rimbaud & Kate Shortt

★★★★
Kernschmeze
CALIFORNIA, CALIF.
The third most captivating **off** on Rimbaud's 2011 elegy to Fukushima is a squalling yet tender meditation. Shortt's improvisations blur the lines between avant garde electronics and free jazz. **AC**



The Shipbuilders

★★★★
Spring Tide
MASSACHUSETTS
Dated from a heretical quartet led by clinical psychologist Matty Laughlin Day who creates magical worlds with his enchanting jumble of Sergio Jones, sea shanty and Mersey melody, the highlights the missing **Stranger's Lament**, the transfixing **Northern Rose. LW**



Paul Simpson

★★★★
Death Must Be Beautiful
MADE IN A depressed fugue in the distant future of his Wild Swans manumans manifests sparse, bitter-sweet regret, betrayal and anguish. Even here, **Just Never Got Over It** - his subtle energies prove cathartic. **W**

EXTENDED PLAY

Nick Cave

★★★★★
Seven Psalms EP

CAVE NEEDED IT UP
CAVE THINGS, Nick Cave's merch booth, is a wondrous curiosity shop filled with all sorts of strange objects - and other beautiful little objects that are almost impossible to stare at. So this very 10-inch, reissues with Warren Ellis and the Carnage a burn sessions should feel right at home. Like the title says, there's seven psalms, which Cave wrote in a week during lockdown one a day. Each of them is spoken word, less than two minutes long, and set to music that's ornate (Hane Merry On Me), ambient (Spindout, Glorious Spindout), spectral and spiritual. That's side one - side two is taken up with a 12-minute instrumental - a ruminative play of dark on dark, with a deep drone and a synthesized **...it's great that's quite how Cave calls the record "one long meditation on faith, rage, grief, energy, sex, and praise. A ..."**
...it's great that's quite how Cave calls the record "one long meditation on faith, rage, grief, energy, sex, and praise. A ..."
...it's great that's quite how Cave calls the record "one long meditation on faith, rage, grief, energy, sex, and praise. A ..."



Steven R. Smith

★★★★★
Spring
JOB, APRIL 4 LP
After 10 years of folk-drum magic, the West Coast guitarist still bargains. Made with cinematic Gareth Davis, **Spring** is like Bruce Langhorne's **Hand** score stretched thin so the light can slum through, the centre can dissolve, and the edges fray and distort. **AM**



The Umoja Music Project

★★★★★
Home
FUNKY/INSTRUMENTAL WITH
A virtual hook-up of Malawian and UK musicians, one of them, Paul McCartney, adding a tight groove to the title track (the 'J' highlight). The rest 'fuses hip-hop, reggae, jazz, funk and more, sung in Chewchwa. **B**

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WITH BELLEY DRUMMALL

Yesterday's Gone

Fleetwood Mac's long-reigning queen of the blues explores female and male blues recordings of yore. A stellar solo career resurfaces. By Mark Blake

Christine McVie

★★★★★

Songbird: A Solo Collection

2010 • 110 MIN.

OH, WHAT stories Christine McVie could tell. The daughter of a physician and a teacher, the former Christine Perfect was a

Pennsylvania art-school graduate who ran away to London and joined the British blues boom. She spent the late '60s as the lone female in guitarist Star Webber's boys club Chicken Shack. It owed to the best part of 50 years off and on, as Fleetwood Mac's co-vocalist, songwriter and keyboard player.

Christine joined the group in 1970, just as their quosotic guitarist Peter Green was heading for the emergency exit. She rode out the lean years blossoming as a songwriter on hits like "Landsay" and other-oke-okeo version of Fleetwood Mac. McVie composed and sang Don't Stop and You Make Loving Fun, while sharing a studio and stage with her married ex-husband, bass guitarist John, and relieving new recruits and estranged lovers Lindsey Buckingham and Steve Nicks.

McVie's blues roots and English enunciation (although she claims the sometimes Americanized version in *Reflections*) are out her Cal fornicus bandmates' never-gonna-pop-and-when-walks. One of her most famous Mac compositions, Songbird, is included here—and ends its title to this 10-song collection.

Of course, not all Fleetwood Mac members suit a career as the same. Steve Nicks went to Number 1 in the US with her 1981 debut, *Bella Donna*, while Lindsey Buckingham continues to preach beautifully to what Shakespeare's Henry V called "we happy few, we band of brothers." Christine never joined in, though she had what she called "a brief sojourn" with a solo career: reissue *Christine Perfect*, an album of half originals and half covers, in 1970. That was 1970, 1980's *Christine McVie* and 2003's *I: The Woman*, the two sets for which *Songbird* is drawn. Another album

challenged Fleetwood Mac's sales figures, but both celebrate McVie's talent in its purest form. This is Christine McVie's career.

Producer Glyn Johns' deft re-mastering papers over the grain between songs, recored two decades and several lifetimes of technology apart. More important, McVie's songwriting rarely wavers all course: "I'm good with a hook," she once understated, and pretty much everything here has a peerless melody. That, and what McVie called "the boogie-bass, left-hand thing," meaning the sawing-fats Domino swing which propelled Say You Love Me Don't Stop, Hold Me etc.

McVie recovered her self-titled LP when Fleetwood Mac were on one of their breaks. Surprisingly, only two songs from it make the cut here: The modest hits, Lure With Snow, Us Two and Got A Head On Me (Billboard Top 30 and Top 10 respectively, are strangely absent).

Instead, The Challenge's keying FM-radio groove includes Lindsey Buckingham's wispery backing vocals and

Eric Clapton's sleepy-sounding guitar, captured on a flying visit to Monterey's Marina del Rey. Meanwhile, Ask Anybody, recorded after a convivial afternoon in a Salabury pub, is date-stamped by bubbling fretless bass and her drinking partner and co-writer Steve Winwood's purring keyboard. Musica by, it would have dotted right onto Winwood's *Talking Back To The Night* album.

As often happens on the older masters, McVie's voice and lyrics transcend those very '80s moments. Ask Anybody isn't the only song here in which she addresses the men in her life—but it's the best. "He's a devil and an angel," she sings, "and the combination's driving me wild." This is, after a moment who was once engaged to forward Beach Boy Dennis Wilson.

Most of *Songbird*, though, comes from the period McVie left Fleetwood Mac for a time in 1998. Christine talked about re-training as a chef and opening a restaurant, but returned seven years later with *In The Mezzanine*, created with ex-husband Mac's main members' recently ex-husband and Portuguese musician Fado Quaresma, and her nephew Dan Perfect.

The weakest song here, despite the sweetest melody is Northern Star, where Aunt Christine cheerfully serenades Dan's wife for him. She's better when exposing her own life and loves broad contains the album's biggest hook and packs the same melancholy punch (on the line "even told the rising sun...") as most of 2010's quietly brilliant Buckingham *Mojo*, the best album Fleetwood Mac never made.

McVie's splendidly unblatant Sweet Revenge, which serves up as she improves another feckless lover. Less woman scorned, more woman indifferent, the message is compounded by some tinkling woman boss-style keyboards and the song's otherwise sunny disposition. Billy Quaresma previously had a credit on Fleetwood Mac's Little Lies and co-wrote this album's Easy Come, Easy Go. McVie could probably sing this sort of bashed bluesy pop with her hair asleep. So too, the semi-acoustic Given It Back (reissued with Fleetwood Mac's sometime guitarist Billy Burnette, but both retain an effortless charm).

There are two not-quite new songs here. The chirpy but aught Slow Down was written but rejected for the soundtrack to 1985's *American Flyers*, in which Kevin Costner played a cyclist attesting an American. The movie flopped. Far superior is A.J. You Gotta Do, a vocal duet with her songwriting partner and bassist, the late George Hawkins. It's a snuffling, soulful pop hit, and was lost for over 25 years before being re-discovered for this project.

A reworker, *Songbird*, closes the album. The original was recorded for 1977's *Rainbow* at an empty auditorium in Berkeley Cal formas, at night. McVie sang and played piano while Buckingham strummed an acoustic guitar to help keep time. Has her version surrounds McVie's original vocal with swooping strings, arranged by Grammy Award-winning composer Vince Mendoza. It doesn't usurp the *Rainbow* version but it shines a new light on the song.

Songbird doesn't overstay its welcome, and a few more entries from the catalogue (including those missing *Billboard* hits) would have been welcome. But there's a sense here of McVie showing up her agency, and gently reminding the world that the Mac's brilliant, breezy Buckinghams and Nicks aren't a one-size-fits-all songwriters.

After selling more than 120 million records worldwide, no group could seriously claim to have a secret weapon. But *Songbird* helps demonstrate that Christine McVie is the closest thing Fleetwood Mac has to one. After all, they're never the same without her.



"Pretty much everything here has a peerless melody."



BACK STORY: IN MOMENTS

Christine McVie delivered the chords and lyrics to *Songbird* once today daily in a living room. She would sit down at the piano and played and sang the whole song straight away. "It would've been a special thing," she said. McVie was so terrified of forgetting it, she spent the rest of the night re-playing the song, and Susanna's record label stood up and in the morning and she could record an early version.

...and she's the one who's
been with Mac, here
in secret weapon.





Love To Burn

BY **DAVID LEE**
PHOTOGRAPH BY **CHRIS WATSON**

Neil Young with Crazy Horse

★★★★

Toast

RECORD: UCLT

NEIL YOUNG A YEAR after *Barn*, Neil's second album in a row with the Horse, he has a third. Names for the San Francisco

studio where it was recorded in 2001, *Toast's* legendary status among Neil's abandoned albums was up there with *Homegrown* (1975) and it was finally released last winter in '02. It's interesting the reason Neil gave for shelving *Homegrown* was the same he gave for *Toast*: that it was "too sad." But a concerned love-gone-wrong, first Carrie Snodgrass, then Amy Poehler, "I couldn't handle it at that time," Neil says. "I just skipped it and went on to... another album in its place."

That album was *Are You Ready?* (2002), made with Booker T & the M.G.'s, the Stan

house band he'd been playing with since the mid-'90s. *Romance* was hardly a cheer-fest either. Three of its songs were with the original *Toast*, including *Goats on Fire*, one of the highlights on both albums and featuring the Horse, not the M.G.'s. Neil knew there was just one band to do justice to a heavy, heartbroken song about Native Americans, General Custer, the Battle of Big Horn and Neil's own marital battles.

Toast has just seven tracks, but most are lengthy. Two are epics. *Boon Boon Boon* (the 13-minute closer) is a strange, slinky, murky song that didn't make it onto *Romance* and might have sounded better there. *Lovers Of Love* was used on *Romance's* sleeve but isn't actually included on the album with a melancholy melody. '60s pop feel and female backing vocals (Neil's half-sister Astrid and wife Pepp). It sounds great. *Quit*, meanwhile, which seems a little more serious and downcast for the role of *Toast's* opening song, feels more at home as track four on *Romance*.

And the rest? How Ya Do is a slow, doomy intro, a touch of sad '60s Beach Boys — "that happy glow," tender vocals and guitar. *White T-shirt* is a minor key, grungey guitar intro tells a story that seems to be about a lumberjack who can't cut trees. But to these ears, the finest moments come when the Horse have a song like *Standing In The Light Of Love* to cut loose on an act about building that glorious, messy, moonlit sound in this case, around a riff that sounds an awful lot like *Smoke On The Water*. "Where they let me go, where they took me, was unbelievable," Neil said. "*Toast* stands on its own to my collection."



Various

★★★★

Studio One

Women Vol. 2

MCA

MCA's 1998 box set, *Studio One: The Best of the Studio One Sound*, is a treasure trove of reggae.

Female singers were afforded few opportunities in Kingston, Jamaica when they did get in front of the mic they made a count. A Studio One Marcia Griffiths was queen, and three of the 18 tracks collected on this cherry pick of Clement Dodd's reggae sisters are hers. 1962's *Love Me Good*, 1962's *Melody Life* and '67's *Summer Night* are all showcases for her smooth but strong delivery. Other big names included are Horlene Ellis and Jennifer La. Both deeply soulful, the latter

successfully reworks Pete Seeger's *Turn Turn Turn*. Turn is as sub a dub, the former delivers *Turn Turn Turn* as a soul reggae. *Obscure*, meanwhile, include Nana McLean's enchanting cover of the Everly Brothers' "I'll Kiss You

and *Alison*

Johnny Osbourne

★★★★

Never Stop Fighting

Capricorn

Osbourne's 1998 set of

albums is a

tribute to

his father

and

the

reggae

scene.

Osbourne

is a

reggae

artist.

Osbourne

is a

reggae positively soars on the militant title track and horns assisted rocker *Give A Little Love* — both boosted by King Tubby protégé Scientist's sparse, punchy treatment. The odd rhythm number aside (Sister Myler's "Hey, Sister" really wasn't for your sister"), *Never Stop Fighting* nonetheless showcases a supremely talented singer at the top of his game and as one with the emergent dancehall sound.

—Sean McLean

Orchestra

★★★★

Orchestra Massako

ANNO DOMINI

Orchestra Massako

is a

reggae

album.

Orchestra

Massako

is a

reggae

album.

Orchestra

Massako

is a

reggae positively soars on the militant title track and horns assisted rocker *Give A Little Love* — both boosted by King Tubby protégé Scientist's sparse, punchy treatment. The odd rhythm number aside (Sister Myler's "Hey, Sister" really wasn't for your sister"), *Never Stop Fighting* nonetheless showcases a supremely talented singer at the top of his game and as one with the emergent dancehall sound.

—Sean McLean

remained at the helm of this mighty musical giant until its disbanding in 1997 and the four pre-recorded floor-flicks on his 80-year vinyl release are all excellent, culled from three prime years of the late '70s and early '80s. *Openers* *Orchestra Massako*, one of two songs featuring Guianan singer Amara Yarab. It's a rousing stomp, exultant, rumba and rumba. *Orchestra Massako* shows off the competency of the horns, and the call and response (Dabomb, from the extremely rare volume 1 album), has complex time signatures, a deft guitar hook, and percussive elements that mesh down to your bones.

—David Katz

John Di Meola

★★★★

AI Di Meola, John Di Meola, Paco De Lucia

★★★★

Saturday Night

in San Francisco

Label: Nonesuch

Three virtuosos, three

males, a billion of notes.

In 1981, for a certain sort of

shed-friendly jazz, there

was night music regular than

Recorded live at the Warfield Theatre, it captured fusion greats McLaughlin and Di Meola in a three-way duel with flamenco giant De Lucia and pasturing quietly scanted so good. For 40 years it was thought no sister recording of Friday's follow-up existed, but after much searching by Di Meola and his team, here it is. The setlist is completely different, but the combustible interaction remains the triumvirate's searing ecstatic heights of ban-passing fluidity, moments like *Meeting Of The Spirits*. Though perhaps only De Lucia's solo performance of *Manavara de Ja* reaches the compositional heights of *Friday Night's* Mediterranean Sunday, whoops from the bassist-cow audience remind us that Saturday night was favored too.

—James McInerney

MUSIC BY JOHN DI MEOLA

DI MEOLA
McLAUGHLIN
DE LUCIA

1991



Star man: cosmic howler Twink smokes up in his Alabaster Crowley.

Super Fuzz

Twink
★★★★

You Reached For The Stars
The Best Of Twink

SANDAZO

FOR LONDON counterculture impresario Joe Boyd, the '60s peaked in the early hours of July 1, '67. His UFO Club partner, John 'Hopps' Hopkins, had just been jailed after a drugy drug bust, with the News Of The World stoking the persecution of the long-haired free-thinking and free-loving every Sunday. Most notorious Stones Mick and Keith 14 protest. That night some 200 UFO regulars marched to the NCTW, heading, at its head Twink, the drummer of the evening's entertainment, Tomorrow. Back at the UFO in 4am, Tomorrow played the stacks of their lives. Twink leaping into the crowd, begging, crawling and chanting "Revolution, revolution."

At that moment Boyd recalls in his memoir *White Bicycles* "The task of history was with us and music, was the key."

Fifty-five years later and now Mohammed Abdullahi Twink (the name fans had thrust upon Colchester's John Acker after a hair product to tame unruly curls) is still with us, a legendary figure at that high time of history but something of a footnote in the actual music.

Where Spinal Tap bizarrely misread drummer after drummer as it leaped about, every new bandwagon from its beat group origins, Twink combusted through bands in a similar activist progress before brushing the medium tune with psych-rockers Tomorrow and SF answer-era Pretty Things, then answering the call of Grove's beatniks answer to the MK 5 Pink Fairies. As the 60s sun set, he squeezed out a solo LP, *Think Pink*, the core of this compilation and template for his subsequent stop-start career of cosmic curios, trippy twaddle, maximum heaviness



and occasional oddball inspiration basically, the kind of thing that pales next to a 4 amber-colored Carrot.

So the missing from Twink's own track selection here is the achingly graceful Mann & Dast from 2015's *Think Pink II* as that would have perfectly teed up Ain't Got A Clue penned by his father in 1965 in protest against protest songs and reworked by Twink in 2019 in the muscular psych style he'd settled on 50 years earlier; think *Bedazzled* by Drimble Wedge And The Vegetation and you're halfway there. Where Peter Cook cranked up a flat English non-singing style, like many scripted Isle song thrushes, Twink generously shies away from trying too hard, a rhesus attitude suited to such tunes as Fear Of The Unknown, a reverse bunker, not too wary to attempt. But on '96's title track You Reached For The Stars he cries and succeeds in a song eerily hordobadoving Bowie's Backstar.

Being British psych, a paradox. Frerkingington-Tomas feyness goes as Lydia Laubybird, and, far better, *Think Pink's* Tipton On The Highest Hill, with faulcous guitar by Pink Fairy Paul Rudolph. This alone matches any Pink Floyd effort of the time, and if ever Sauerful Of secrets want a support act, thank Twink.

FILE UNDER...

Little Green

Green-eyed teenage singer Linda Hoover made a record with some future heavyweights. Then nothing happened. By Jim Irvin.

IN 1965, after winning a high-school talent contest, 14-year-old Linda Hoover was invited to meet with American singing star Bobby Darin's manager, Ed Burton, and his young staff-producer Gary Kannon at Darin's TM Music label. Hoover's father trusted Burton but wasn't sure about the young hipster. But she recalls, "I liked Gary immediately, thought he was funny and cool and spoke my language."

Kannon kept in touch, and several years later invited her to the Brill Building offices of JATA, the publishing company of dwindling hitmakers Jay & The Americans. There she met one of the band, Kenny Vance, who took her to a tiny room just big enough for a piano, a desk and two young songwriters, whose quirky songs Vance thought might suit Linda, now 19, and possessed of a strong voice but not much material.

Those writers were Donald Fagen and Walter Becker, soon to be Steely Dan. Kannon's real name was Gary Katz, and he would produce all the Dan's albums in the '70s. But their glaucous decade would commence working on an LP for Hoover which Katz had persuaded hard-bill music man Morris Levy to bankroll. The players would be the nascent Dan, formed after guitarist Denny Dias had placed a

newspaper ad looking for musicians, asking that "No assholes" apply.

Hoover's strident, slightly theatrical tone sounded very much of her generation, as if she might have been in the cast of Hair. Fagen came up with a song called I Mean To Shine, which became the record's title cut. Fagen and Becker provided five songs. Jones, an early example of their thing about addiction, a favourite topic, might seem slightly out of reach for a callow teen, but Hoover makes a good stab at The Roaring Of The Lamb, a knotty song that immediately rhymes "fallback" with "bitouac", its chorus like something by Jimmy Webb, tricky with an opaque lyric: "The roaring of the lamb revealed its awesome powers, and the minutes turned to hours, no one's the same." Cute, but you can

understand why publishers hadn't been exactly falling over themselves to give these guys a break until they'd stumbled their way into JATA's office.

Unfortunately, the album was shelved by Levy soon after completion, apparently because he suddenly realised that he didn't stand to make money from publishing on it. So it wouldn't provide the kick-start either Hoover or the Dan were expecting.

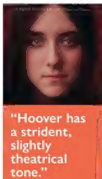
However, an amended I Mean To Shine was recorded by Barbra Streisand on her 1971 album produced by Richard Perry (which also includes her startling cover of John Lennon's Mother). And Katz took tapes of the LP to his audition with ABC Records, securing the deal that led directly to Steely Dan. He offered Hoover the chance to join them in California, but she felt too disillusioned and penniless to make the trip. Reluctantly, she returned to live with her parents.

Fifty-one years later, the Hoover/Dan collaboration is given its first official release, *I Mean To Shine* (Omnivore) ★★☆☆, with Linda's green eyes blazing from Joel Brodsky's front cover image. Despite an obvious discrepancy between Hoover's jejune, heartfelt songs and Becker and Fagen's chewier, more worldly compositions, it's a remarkably cohesive record with a country-rock leaning. A tender cover of The Band's In A Station is a highlight, and on Stephen Stills'

4 + 20 Linda Hoover soars like Linda Ronstadt.

Soucaly, you wouldn't recognise this as Steely Dan — with the country aspect and more acoustic guitar than they ever used — but their high standards are audible in the atmospheric brass arrangements and creamy harmonies.

Though she never found stardom, Hoover continued to make music. Her treasured tape copy of her lost album is the source for this fascinating release.



"Hoover has a strident, slightly theatrical tone."

The Associates

★★★★

Sulk

DMG, CD/EP

The album which sent them into the charts with Party Fears Two gets deluxe 40th anniversary edition.

BILLY MACKENZIE (voice, words) and Alan Rankine (much of everything else) approached pop from deep left-field. After an awkward debut and a year of clamorous, dissonant indie singles, in 1982 they suddenly took off with this tauntingly perverse collision of possibilities. The big hits, Party Fears Two (its piano riff written five years earlier but deemed too like ABBA for the time of punk) and Club Country, were refreshingly weird and histrionic, while No opens with a duet for treated amplifier buzz and jiggled tape measures. Extra discs of outtakes, rarities, remixes and radio sessions underline their apparent ethos: 'If it's odd, turn it up, if it's honky, fuck it up.' Stardom didn't agree with Mackenzie, Rankine retired frustrated, an outcome that ultimately benefited neither. Their spotlight moment still sounds gloriously illogical in all departments.

Jim Ivin



The Associates' Billy Mackenzie (left) and Alan Rankine: gloriously illogical.



Amy Winehouse

★★★★

Live At Glastonbury 2007

UMC, LP

June 22, 2007 set available on 2-LP black vinyl or as an exclusive crystal clear set.

Amy was hit or miss live, but on the Pyramid Stage in 2007 she was fabulous. With her bob eye make-up and beautiful standing high, she brought a late-night intimacy to a packed-out, muddy field, under inclement skies. She was nervous – less so during her second appearance later that evening on the Jazz World stage – but vocally invested on her 16-song set, the majority from *Back to Black*: a brilliant ballad, a bewitching Tears Dry On Their Cheek, a stinging Love Is A Losing Game – and uproarious covers of Monkey Man and Cupid, the latter performed live for the first time. By the end of the year she'd been hospitalized with exhaustion and cancelled all her live dates. Here, though, for a moment, she's happy, shining bright.

John Wilson

Grime!l, creating a her own distinct sensibility.

Andy Green

Babe Ruth

★★★★

Darker Than Blue: The Harvest Years (1972-1975)

CHEERY RED, CD/LP

From Hatfield but spiritually Mexico City and Memphis: the Harvest label's best underrated, on 3-CDs.

The first records on Babe Ruth's 1972 debut *First Step* is Alan Shacklock's insistent riffs and Jerry Haan's bawling howl, suggesting a slightly executed but standard imprint of UK hard rock. What follows shatters that image. Decorated by Spanish guitar, oboe and cello, the *Rainways* could have been written by Ennio Morricone; for *A Few Dollars More* he incorporated into The Mexican's rocking beats. Second album *Amor Colaboro* was more optimally 'pop' but tinged with soul and R&B, plus the title track's spaghetti western drama. An epitaphous third album included a sympathetic and epic cover of Curtis

Mayfield's *See People Darling Then Blue*, but original dynamo like *Dancer* and *The Duchess Of Orleans* underlined Shacklock's all-round gifts, which he took with him when he left Babe Ruth to concentrate on producing.

Markus Adam

The Entourage Music And Theatre Ensemble

★★★★

The Mermaid's Purse: Live At Chatham College, 1976

SARTHOUGH RECORDINGS, CD/LP

Wall Matthews' Baltimore-born '70s collective captured at their live peak.



Ever since 2010, when Tompkins Square released *Conversing Of Dreams*, a collection of studio sessions recorded between 1972 and 1977, this once obscure folk-improv collective have undergone a critical renaissance. Although sampled by four 'let on 2020's *Round*, it's the collective work of Matthews and TS that placed this flat belt Popol'Yuh back within the present. Listening to this live set, it's easy to hear why. Although certified in a gentle, organic space reminiscent of Ralph Towner's '70s folk-jazz group Oregon, Entourage also take their acoustic guitar, percussion, keyboards, sax and viola to places utterly

chaotic and free. The brilliantly titled *Ginapp's* title track – through Lightning Spilling pulls together North African jazz, speed metal drumming and extraneous noise wrangling, while the elemental, explosive *Space Headlin* Suicide sounds like a drunken Son City Gish attempting to march rjvama and pulling you along with them. You'll go willingly.

Andrew Klotz

UK Subs

★★★★

Yellow Leader

CHEERY RED, LP

Double 10-inch revival of 2013 LP for original Prestonian punkers.



Anarcho-souls will soon be brushing off gnarled fragments of amyloid nitrate bottles from the original site of the Roxy club in London's Covent Garden. At 73, punk icon Charlie Harper remains the sole original UK Sub, trailing 70-odd past band members in his wake. The whip-smart 'Yellow Leader' was nominally the band's 22nd studio outing, skewed with a Pop Art target? 'You've missed the target?'. Recorded in 2015, present collaborators include Simon Jan appropriately live set. It's easy to hear why. Although certified in a gentle, organic space reminiscent of Ralph Towner's '70s folk-jazz group Oregon, Entourage also take their acoustic guitar, percussion, keyboards, sax and viola to places utterly

heading for a whole lotta trouble... When I go down the park, she's there, I go to the pub, buy a round, she's sitting on my chair.' Cheers, Uncle Punk.

Andrew Collins

Various

★★★★

Gotta Get A Good Thing Goin'

CHEERY RED, CD/LP

Timely survey of Black Music in '60s Britain.



Like Soul Jazz's recent *Live Between Moments*, this 4-CD box celebrates black musical expression in the UK but with the focus solely on the 1960s, a decade impacted by the Windrush generation's emerging sound system culture, the African diaspora and the wider availability of US soul imports, touring venues and pirate radio playlists. Half the material is given over to soul and R&B, the material rich and varied, spanning the formative anti-racist protest of Liverpool's The Chords – later *The Real Thing* – and rare-ups by Gene Washington and Herbie Goins, both American servicemen who made the UK their home. Vital ska, rocksteady and early reggae sounds are provided by Rico, Laurel Aitken and Winston Gibson, while there is also ball-to-out jazz from Dames Cleo Laine and Shirley Bassey, and highlife from Flash Domino & The Superstics.

Lutz Wilson

Asha Puthli

★★★★

The Essential

Asha Puthli

MINDS, CD/CLP

Career-spanning compilation of wild card Indian singer/actress.



Asha Puthli never looked back after producer John Hammond higher her to Columbia. The classically trained Indian singer, first heard on *The Savages*' 1968 B-side *Pain*, junked her job as a BA flight attendant and relocated to New York where ethnikal, high-pitched tones fit up Ornette Coleman's trippy breakthrough *Science Fiction*. This breathless escalation of career highs takes in her phase-shifting cover of JJ Cale's *Love* and the wily hedonism of the *Gamble & Huff*-produced *One Night Affair* before she finds her galactic disco feat with the proto-*Moroder* *The Devil In Loose* and some sampled-sounding synth-pop of *Space Talk*. Puthli's sultry East/West fusions combined pop smarts with jazz longings and post-modernisms (see *Chiklo* Chiklo, a Hindi techno remake of *Smooth*



Save on **Orbital's Phil (left)** and **Paul Hartnoll** celebrate over 30 years in the game.



Orbital

★★★★★

30 Something

LONDON: CD/LP

Rooted in the rich soil of DIY, 30 years of the Hartnolls on 2-CD/4-LP.

COLLECTIVELY NAMED after a motorway, brothers Phil and Paul Hartnoll from Orford, Kent, preceded Harry Potter in a cupboard under the stairs. Borrowing dad's tape recorder while the nascent rave scene boiled



beyond their reach, local news reported "hundreds of people gathering for the latest craze". Their

accidental rave anthems *Chime* — which reached Number 17 — landed them on TOPP, where they wore anti-Poll Tax T-shirts and sent a speech to Thatcher. Fame beckoned and Orbital never looked back without their torch-battery headsets. This well-holed 24-track collection has been hand-picked,

remixed and re-imagined by the likes of David Holmes, whose 12-minute *Belfast* is a genuine, architectural epic, and features Orbital's highest placed single *Satan Live*, scaling to Number 3 in 1996. It also includes a planned 2012 Paralympics duet with Professor Stephen Hawking. If you left a piece of yourself in *Glastonbury 1994* — or at a subsequent Orbital festival epoch — **30 Something** takes you into past, present and *Phuture*. *Anders Colby*

Rahsaan Roland Kirk

★★★★

Blackness

MODERN HARMONY: LP

One-man-band section's mammoth opus reissued on its 50th birthday.

Thelonious Monk's notorious eccentricities pale into insignificance in comparison with the musical antics of multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, an extrovert jazz savant whose combustible live performances married a humorously knock-up-style routine with trenchant political invective and wild displays of virtuosity this party piece was blowing three years hence at once. Of all the albums he made during his relatively short life (he died aged 42, 1972) *Blackness* (newly mastered by the in-demand sound guru Kevin Gray) best encapsulates Kirk's anarchic musical approach via his notably inventive mash-up of soul, funk, jazz, blues and gospel elements. Alongside a cache of terrific R&B covers — including a dreamy *Rite-lee* take on Bill Withers' *Ain't No Sunshine* and a ferocious deconstruction of Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* — Kirk rehashes a soft-rock standard, *Beard's Make It With You*, into a late-night blues, and offers some striking self-penned numbers, including the rousing, Afro-centric title song. Kaleidoscopic stuff. *Charles Waring*

|||||||

XTC

★★★★

White Music

PARADE: LP

Swindon art punk's landmark 1978 debut reissued.

XTC keyboard player Andy Partridge used to wear a T-shirt with a hand-painted slogan, "I Ain't Never Been To Art School," which ironically, looked exactly like the work of an art student. The group used the new wave as a springboard into an arch, agitated style that was described as "quirky", "twee-yinky" and, as singer and guitarist Andy Partridge noted, "almost any adjective ending in -y." *White Music* is a garish and strainingly confident release, including a bizarre and disorienting *Art*, as singer and trumpeter Charles Delfino, Stanley Cowell on electric and acoustic piano, plus vocalist Andy Bay on the gospel-tinged title track. It's not a perfect recording. Cowell's piano often sounds muffled, while Delfino's trumpet sounds sharp, but it's that semi-pop-on-the-run quality that gives this set its youth, fire and energy. *Anders Colby*

Mike Barnes

hear the audience feeling the split, as if this French crowd were in a Gospel church, enthusiastically hollering after each turn.

Michael Slezacek

|||||||

Frank Zappa

★★★★★

Zappa/Eric

ZAPPA/LIVE: CD/LP

Three full concerts featuring 71 tracks from 1978-79.



"We'll play you one hell of a show," Zappa announces at the start of the 1978 set from Edleboro University in Erie County, PA — and they do. This is as well played and recorded as any live set, and Zappa's restless creative tinkering yielded revised arrangements of *Village Of The Sun* and a series of songs from *The Mothers' 1965* debut *Freak Out!*. The '78 concert at Erie County Fieldhouse is usually impressive. But with '79's shows come the inevitable languors. Only 10 minutes of this music has been released before — *More Trouble Every Day* and *Son Of Orange County* on *Boyz n' Berries* — and tellingly they were edited. But here we get the full versions, and 22 minutes of Dupree's *Paradise* and 19 minutes of *Black Napkins* proves too much of a good thing. *Mike Barnes*

George Michael

★★★★★

Older

SONY: CD/LP

Downbeat, broody, jazz-tinged third album, vastly expanded.



By 1990, George Michael was battered. His lover Anselmo Feleppa had died from AIDS and the world's biggest pop star had spent two years in an unsuccessful legal battle with his former label. Michael poured his grief and anger into *Older*, which he would come to regard as his finest moment. All these years later, its impudic, grown-up charms remain undimmed, most notably on the sultry title track ("Don't you think I'm looking older?") and the heart-breaking tribute to Feleppa, *You Have Been Loved*, although the joint being lit at the end of *Spinning The Wheel* cheekily revealed how he was dealing with the pain. Alongside the standard vinyl version, there's a 5-CD box set which includes an exhaustive cohort of previously available remixes and rarities, such as Michael's collaboration with Astrid Gilberto on Antônio Carlos Jobim's *Desafinado* and the gospel version of *One More Try*. Excellent set. *John Aizlewood*

Max Roach

★★★★★

Members, Don't Get Weary

COLLECTOR'S CHOICE: LP

Vinyl release of the big-top drummer's proto-funk landmark.



Released in 1968, two years after the curiously pedestrian swing-percussion showcase *Drums Unlimited*, this is the sound of Max Roach leaving behind his trademark civil-rights battle cry and polyrhythmic trademark, and finding a new, lyrical melodicism. Here he drew on the trend for jubilation: "New Thing" spiritualism, while pointing the way towards the '70s jazz fusion of Lonnie Liston Smith and Herbie Hancock. This is Roach caught between innovation and a kind of desperation, working with veteran bassist Jymie Merritt on electric bass plus the young talents of saxophonist Gary Sartz, trumpeter Charles Tolliver, Stanley Cowell on electric and acoustic piano, plus vocalist Andy Bay on the gospel-tinged title track. It's not a perfect recording. Cowell's piano often sounds muffled, while Tolliver's trumpet sounds sharp, but it's that semi-pop-on-the-run quality that gives this set its youth, fire and energy. *Anders Colby*



Various

★★★★

Whatever You Want: Bob Crewe's 60s Soul Sounds
 4001 CLASSIC

Don't sleep, R&B and tough pop from the backroom Jersey boy.

Bob Crewe was the Newark, New Jersey-born writer and producer who masterminded numerous hits for Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons – he also suggested Valli use his falsetto voice. Sherry ate as fat on this collection of Crewe's work though. The focus here is on his less celebrated songs, so we get The Four Seasons' popular Northern spin *Fin Gamma Charge*, taken from 1967's *New Gold Hits*, and Valli's deeply soulful solo track *You're Gonna Hear Yourself* from '65 instead. Crewe shared his songs to film shorts, and Chuck Jackson's *Another Day* and Jerry Butler's title cut, both drama-unfolding ballads, are perfect illustrations. Crewe was also a keen soundscaper of the team condition – see the girl group pop of Dee Dee Sharp's *Deep Dark Secret* and *Long Time*, No Lie by Tracey Day.

Lars Wilson



Godley & Crème

★★★★

Fabjous Days: The Secret World Of Godley & Crème 1967-69
 SHARPHEAT CD

Before 10cc, there was this. In 1968, recession entrepreneur Giorgio Gomelsky decided to discover and mentor the British Simon & Garfunkel. Settling on a couple of former art students playing in a Manchester R&B band, Gomelsky renamed Kevin Godley and Lol Creme *Fabjous & Runicide* (Simon and he claimed, financed an LP. Alas, Gomelsky disappeared and the untitled album – Graham Gouldman and Eric Stewart guested – remained unreleased until now, where it's joined by assorted extras

including Hello Binkies and Goodnight Binkies, both recorded for Manchester's late-'60s celebrity hangout, Binkies. Very much of its time lyrically ("Do you know wrong from right, virgin soldiers?") it's salvaged by multi-layered harmonies which assemble The Mamas & The Papas without The Mamas and And Indians, and, on it's *The Best Season In The World*, the very pop undertow which would serve 10cc so well.

John Aizlewood



Pauline Oliveros

★★★★

Accordion & Voice
 IMPREC. CD/CDLP

The 1982 debut solo acoustic LP from the experimental electronic composer. Recorded when Oliveros had just turned 50 and was living in an A-frame house in a meadow at the Zen Mountain Centre in upstate New York, *Accordion & Voice* is an album inspired by landscape, changing seasons and the sound of the wind through the trees. It is also a record about meditation and patience, captured in the long, deep tones she was able to conjure from her huge, customised bass accordion. If that suggests something soothing and reflective, think again. The first piece, *Horse Songs* from *Cloud*, starts off as a sharp, piercing migraine tone that gradually opens up into a shimmering series of wave patterns, joined by Oliveros's wordless long-tone vocals, and then processed electronically, the drums assume a dark, moiré complexity reminiscent of Terry Riley's *Shri Ganes* or Peppol Vitti's *Hosonora*. *Alto*, a rich, immersive sound that effortlessly shifts from unreeling to mesmerising.

Andrew Mole



Chuck Armstrong

★★★

Shakin' Up
 REAL GOOD LP

George Kem-produced Southern soul collectable from '76, when Al Green was at his peak. Armstrong's tone and phrasing are very like Green's, but who's quibbling with tracks as strong as *Goddamn Gracious* or *You've Got To Deal With It* (This Superworld). *JR*



The House Of Love

★★★★

Burn Down The World
 CHERUB RED CD

Rock hugeness was the plan, but when guitarist Terry Bickers left in '88, Guy Chadwick's band didn't survive. Over eight discs and 139 studio, demo and live tracks, their 3-LP career-label period is fitfully wonderful, but elsewhere stuck in archness. *NR*



Various

★★★★

United Dreadlocks Volumes 1 & 2
 DOCTOR BIRD CD

Top ranking, 44-track selection of late-'70s reggae productions by Jamaica's Mighty Two – Jan Gibbs and genius engineer Brent Thompson. This golden era's crime de crime – Dennis Brown, Culture, Gregory Isaacs, etc – served up hit after hit of poppy, righteous roots music. *SM*



Beastie Boys

★★★★

Check Your Head
 LINC LP

Thirtieth anniversary, 4-LP edition of the Beasties' live hip-hop/beat opus: fuzzy, grooving and appealingly wayward, it still sounds freshly provoked. The two extra discs of live material and remixes pour more gravy on the cake. And everyone thought they were history. *PH*



The Rolling Stones

★★★★

7" Singles 1963-1966
 AMBC LP

The first 18 singles, in a variety of tastefully reissued US picture bags, with a 32-page booklet, photos and poster. Blue covers, exploratory Marley Pridge lyrics and, laterally, platinum Jagger-Richards co-writes make it a luxurious glimpse into the Stones' dawn. *PH*



Luis Vecchio

★★★★

Contractos
 ADORCAT CD/CDLP

In 1977, Miss Argentina pianist Luis Vecchio moved to Gran Canaria, where he set up a jazz school and recorded the beautiful *Jazz-Autor*. Miles Davis' on-death concert plea about his on/off communication with parallel-universe entity. *Adriano*. *AM*



Farben

★★★★

Textstar+
 BCM MUSIC CD+LP

The glitchy, avant-techno of the wretched cup has aged pretty elegantly, as this 1999-2002 EP camp by German producer Jan Jelinek at times experimental clicks and cuts captured in a inflow house that works as a dancefloor competitive to the dub manoeuvres of Pole. *AM*



Various

★★★★

Never Ending Songs Of Love
 DOCTOR BIRD CD

Two-CD round-up (some vocal) over 200 of the treasure trove producer Duke Reid's romance-themed pop-rogue-45s from 1973-75. Top-tier singers – Pat Kelly, Dennis Hammond, Rosayn Howard – put in a turn, but the lack of any Haste Five (The Duke was no fan) or Haste Thump makes it all a tad mushy. *SM*



Alan Vega

★★★★

Saturn Strip
 REAL SONG MUSIC CD/CDLP

1983 solo reworking of Suicide's instalist electronic essays for the video age. Aided by Rik Gravel and Al Jourgensen, grooves judder and sherry; dogs bark and Vega sings as much as growls. Suicide-like, perhaps, but its pop move sound bang up to date. Big Kid Gamma, a tribute to the Gun Club guitarist. *JR*

RAVINGS & FORMATS

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★★★★★

MOJO-CLASSIC

★★★★

EXCELLENT

★★★

GOOD

★★

DISAPPOINTING

★

BEST AVOIDED

★

DEPLORABLE